

Agriculture Infrastructure Study

Pierce County 2015



Washington State University
Evergreen State College
Pierce Conservation District
Pierce County Agriculture Program
Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable

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Executive Summary

A considerable amount of research related to agriculture in Pierce County has been conducted by a variety of agencies. Most of that research takes a macro view of agriculture and the results are helpful for understanding it as an industry. It has been less useful for understanding the issues facing individual producers and developing projects and programs. The study presented here gathered information from agricultural producers and commercial food buyers through surveys and interviews. The purpose of the study was to gain insights into the successes and challenges experienced by major participants in the local food system.

Producers and purchasers were encouraged to participate in separate on-line surveys in late 2014 and early 2015, and a subset of producer respondents later participated in interviews. The producer survey resulted in sixty-nine usable responses, and the purchaser survey yielded twenty-seven usable responses. Twenty-one producers also participated in interviews to gather more in-depth comments on topics related to the surveys.

Key findings from the study include:

1. Agricultural production is not the primary source of income for most respondents, and the majority are satisfied with the current size of their operation. However, for the one-third of producers that may have an interest in expanding, they see significant obstacles to increasing their production. Because agricultural land is most often purchased outright, high land prices, low land availability and low profit margins combine to make acquiring more land unfeasible. Even if a reasonable cash flow and return on investment can be forecasted for a potential expansion, finding sources of financing is challenging.
2. The current regulatory environment faced by agricultural producers is perceived as daunting. It is viewed as an obstacle to not only expanding, but to operating profitably for any size operation. Producers are faced with multiple layers of regulation from a wide array of agencies at the local, state and federal levels. Regulatory challenges range from learning which regulations apply, the expectations of each regulating agency, an increasing burden of paperwork needed for documenting compliance, the cost of modifications necessary for compliance, and different avenues for appeal and variance associated with each agency. There is also a frustration with limited opportunities to learn about regulatory expectations before punitive actions such as fines are applied.
3. Producer respondents have a vast amount of production experience and many have a desire to share it. They also expressed an interest in sharing marketing strategies, with the caveat that they want to retain control of their own brand identity and product quality.
4. Drainage issues are a problem for a majority of producers, but the cause of those issues vary according to the location and topography of their land. For some, riverine flooding and associated drainage are the problem. For others, ditch maintenance causes problems, and for others seasonal ponding in pastureland is the issue.
5. Many respondents have tried a variety of marketing methods, but most rely on word-of-mouth to build their customer base. Of those that use on-line methods, individual websites are seen as the most effective channel.

6. Many respondents indicated that labor issues are a growing concern. They reported having difficulty finding people to do seasonal agricultural work, and had concerns about increasing labor costs.

7. The availability of “infrastructure,” broadly defined, is seen as a limiting factor for operating or expanding agricultural production. The pool of respondents represented a wide array of products and production techniques. Concomitantly, they suggested a wide variety of infrastructure deficiencies in the region, ranging from tractor repair and implements to cold storage to commercial kitchens to slaughter and butchering facilities and services.

8. By far the most common problems expressed by respondents were finances and weather, with taxes listed as a strong subset of financial problems. In conversations with the interviewers regarding climate, it was not discussed as good or bad, just a reality that weather is never perfect and something producers always have to contend with and take into account. Finances were talked about in terms of income, cash flow and expenses, with many comments that expenses are just too high.

9. Programs and assistance provided through Washington State University and the Pierce Conservation District were seen as generally helpful and many respondents had participated in them. Respondents spoke highly of the WSU Extension Field Agent position, and had observed the recent reduction in the position.

10. Interview participants who participate in farmers markets were nearly universal in their assessment that there are currently enough, and perhaps too many, markets operating. To make selling at farmers markets profitable for farmers, organizers should concentrate on making existing markets better rather than creating new farmers markets.

11. One of the most common requirements of purchasers is that the food they purchase must be safe. They rely on a number of certifications to assure that safety requirements, as well as other goals, are met. In general though, they are counting on government-mandated licensure, inspection and certification, backed-up with food-seller liability insurance, to assure the safety of the food they purchase.

12. Majority of purchasers require some level of pre-processing, even if it is only washing vegetables to get them ready for kitchen preparation.

13. Purchasers consider a larger geographic area to be “local” than do producers. For example, seventy-five percent of purchasers consider anything produced in Washington, Oregon or Idaho to be “local,” whereas only thirteen percent of producers have the same sense of “local.”

14. Of all the variables when choosing from whom to buy products, purchasers are in general agreement that price is the most important factor.

15. While most purchasers would prefer to buy all of their food products from local sources who use the highest in sustainable, humane and ethical practices, if the food cannot be supplied at a competitive price that allows the purchaser at least a minimum margin of profit, they will of necessity purchase from a lower-cost source.

16. Convenience and accessibility are important for purchasers. Fewer suppliers are preferred to more suppliers; ease of ordering is essential, with on-line options preferred; seasonality is a problem for purchasers that buy food year-around or during the western Washington off season for growing.

Those findings suggest a range of possible policy and program responses, including:

1. Support programs that increase affordable access to farmlands and expand preservation funding, such as Conservation Futures and Transfer of Development Rights.
2. Find and support opportunities for new farmers to enter into the trade while building experience and equity toward purchase of farmland.
3. Explore pre-processing needs of purchasers and growers in different types of production and look for opportunities to develop and provide the necessary infrastructure.
4. Continue to streamline regulations regarding health, food safety and land use for producers wherever possible. Find opportunities to help producers understand the variety of regulating agencies, the reasons for the various levels of regulation, and to comply with regulations when streamlining is not an option.
5. Assist in support of County or regional branding and marketing opportunities
6. Provide more education opportunities for producers in a variety of formats and on a schedule that fits with on-farm activities.
7. Help producers learn and implement technology solutions to business challenges.
8. Support farmer-buyer networking events, especially before the growing season begins so contracts can be negotiated and specific crops planted.
9. Provide marketing/media support to farmers, such as helping them develop individual marketing plans, honing their branding or improving their social media skills.
10. Explore the feasibility of creating a centralized way for buyers to find, order, purchase and receive locally-produced products. If a feasible approach is found, support its development and operation.

PART 1 - PRODUCERS

About the Survey

A number of studies have examined the agriculture industry, but policy makers and program developers have found the need for more detailed information. For example, the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), a component of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), has conducted a nationwide Census of Agriculture every 5 years going back to the mid-1800's. Results from the Census provide aggregated information at a tremendous level of detail, and the data is very helpful for understanding the industry as a whole, but it can be very difficult to use for detailed analysis due to the suppression of data for confidentiality reasons. As with the Census, past studies of agriculture specific to Pierce County presented information from a macro perspective, and as such, their results are less helpful for understanding farm operations at an individual level. The results presented here are intended to help address that knowledge gap.

In 2005, a comprehensive study of the agriculture industry in Pierce County, Washington, was completed at the request of the Pierce County Council. The study, conducted in two phases, examined many aspects of agriculture in Pierce County, including income and employment, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), a review of policies and regulations and other factors related to the industry as a whole. Following that effort, a study was commissioned by the Pierce Conservation District to examine Pierce County agricultural lands from an agronomist's perspective. The study was intended to answer the basic question, "how much of what can be grown where in Pierce County?"

To better align programs intended to bolster the agriculture industry, information about what is working well and what are obstacles to success for local agricultural producers is needed. Ideally, such information would be gathered locally and be informed by individual producers. The need for such information is not unique to Pierce County. Very little work has been done in Western Washington to develop information on the needs and challenges facing agricultural producers working at the urban fringe. One such effort was undertaken by Washington State University, with the help of other organizations, in 2012 and 2013. Fruit and vegetable producers in Thurston, Mason and Lewis counties were surveyed regarding several aspects of their operations focusing on infrastructure needs and knowledge of or willingness to participate in cooperative efforts. That effort has subsequently helped inform policies and programs of organizations tasked with supporting the agriculture industry.

The survey discussed here sought to gather information similar to that collected in the Thurston County study. A 49-question survey instrument was posted to SurveyMonkey in late-2014. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to all agricultural producers in Pierce County for whom at least one of the partner organizations had contact information. Those invitations were sent by postal mail and email, and people were reminded about the survey at several agriculture-related events held in late 2014 and early 2015. Respondents to the survey were given the option to enter a drawing for a prize worth \$500, and to participate in an in-person interview related to the survey. Over 1,000 invitations to participate were delivered. The survey was held open for several months, resulting in 72 responses, 69 of which were useable. Unlike the Thurston County survey, respondents to this survey covered a range

of agriculture production categories, including livestock, horticulture, Christmas trees and hay, in addition to fruits and vegetables.

Ag Infrastructure Study Producer Interviews

During 2015 twenty-one farmers were interviewed in Pierce County. The object of these interviews was to supplement the Agriculture Infrastructure Survey with a more in-depth one-on-one conversation. The intent was to get more detailed responses than could be written on the survey form. The interview was conversational in style with several general topics presented for discussion. The interviewee was encouraged to speak on any topic they chose and to go into any level of detail they desired.

Some interview participants were self-selected for inclusion in that they indicated they would be willing to be interviewed on the Survey form. Other interview participants were contacted directly if they were considered to be a significant operation in the County. Others were also contacted in order to ensure a wide sample of different operation sizes, types and locations in the County.

With permission of the interviewee the conversation was recorded and the responses were later transcribed. Responses to interview questions are used throughout this report to add detail and nuance to the analysis of on-line responses, and their summarized comments are included as an appendix at the end of this report.

About The Respondents

The first survey question asked for respondent's Zip Code. No instruction was given regarding what zip code to use, so it is unclear from the responses if answers refer to respondent's home or place of production, if those places are different. As presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 on the following page, respondents reported Zip Code areas from most of the unincorporated parts of Pierce County, as well four responses from other counties. The distribution of responses is similar to the distribution of agricultural land found in the 2005 Agriculture Strategic Plan, with a slight over-representation from the Central County area and a slight under-representation from the Roy/Eatonville area. Even with that under-representation, the largest portion of responses were from the Roy/Eatonville area.

Figure 1 – Number of responses by Zip Code

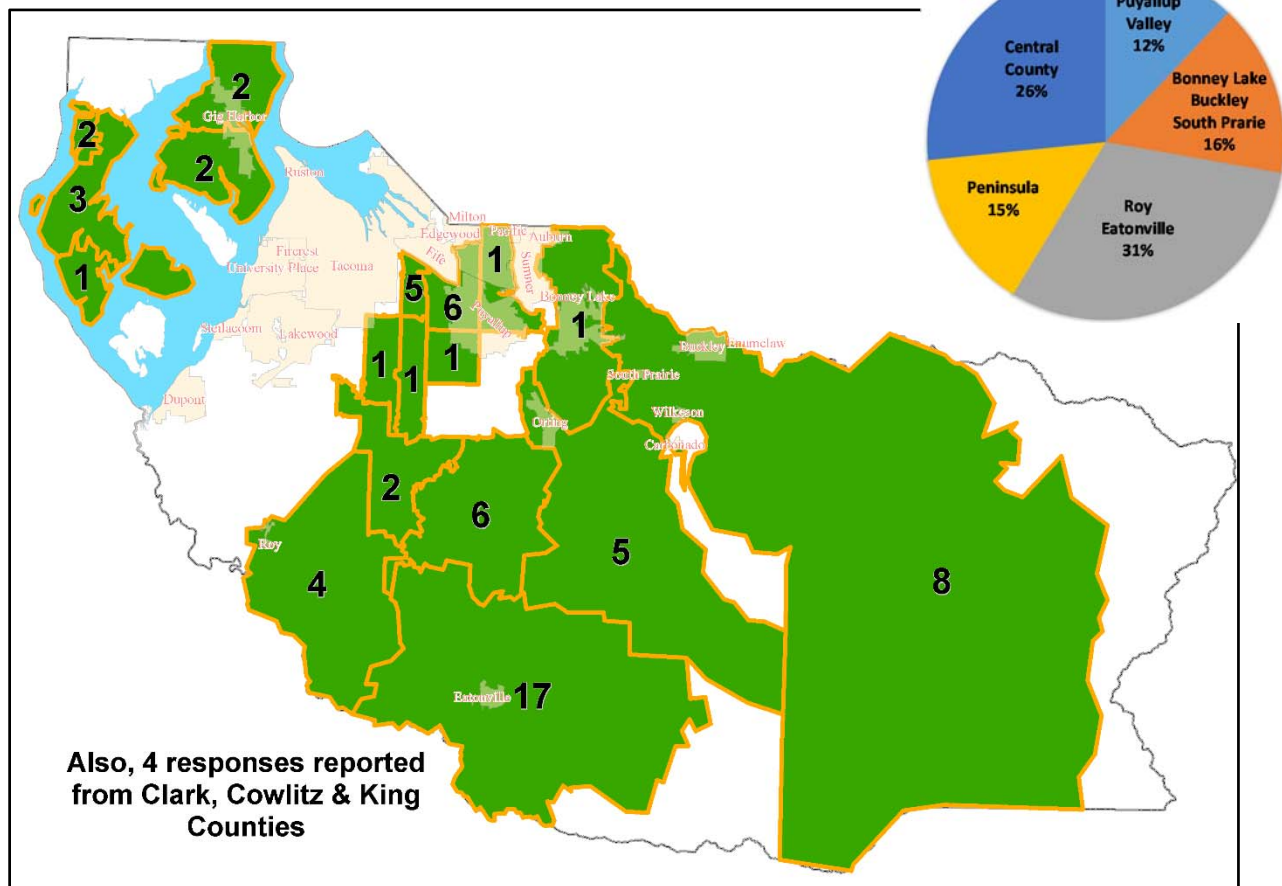


Table 1 – Comparison of survey respondent and agricultural land distribution

Ag Area	Survey Respondents		2005 Ag Strategic Plan		Difference
	Count	Percent	Acres	Percent	Percentage Points
Puyallup Valley	8	12.1%	6,606	13.8%	-1.7%
Bonney Lake Buckley	11	15.7%	7,290	15.2%	0.5%
Roy Eatonville	21	30.9%	19,723	41.2%	-10.3%
Peninsula	10	14.7%	5,155	10.8%	3.9%
Central County	18	26.6%	7,318	15.3%	11.3%
Anderson Island / Nisqually	0	0.0%	1,787	3.7%	-3.7%
Total	68	100.0%	47,880	100.0%	

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, survey respondents had a much higher level of educational attainment than the overall population of Pierce County and of the United States. Whereas nearly twenty-eight percent of respondents had earned a graduate or professional degree, only eleven percent of the U.S. population and eight percent of the Pierce County population have that level of educational attainment. Similarly with attainment of Bachelor's degrees, respondents had about twice the level of attainment as does the U.S. population, and well over twice the level of Pierce County attainment. Conversely, while fourteen percent of U.S. adults and nine percent of Pierce County adults have less than a high-school or equivalent education, only about one percent of respondents had a similar level of educational attainment. Those attainment levels are also much higher than for farmers in general across the United States. The USDA Economic Research Service finds that nationally, twenty-five percent of farmers have completed college, another twenty-five percent have attended some college, forty-two percent finished high school but went no further, and nine percent did not complete high school.

Figure 2 – Educational attainment of respondents

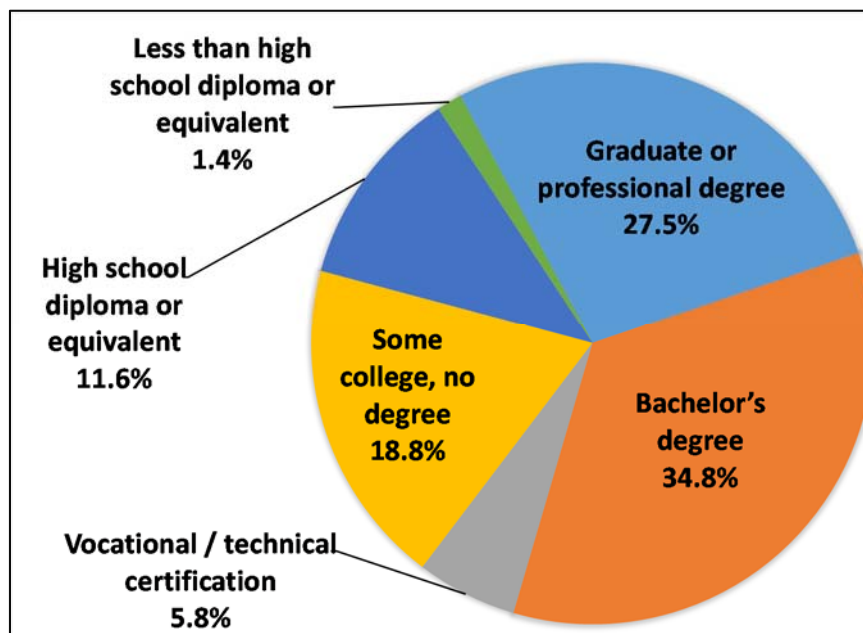
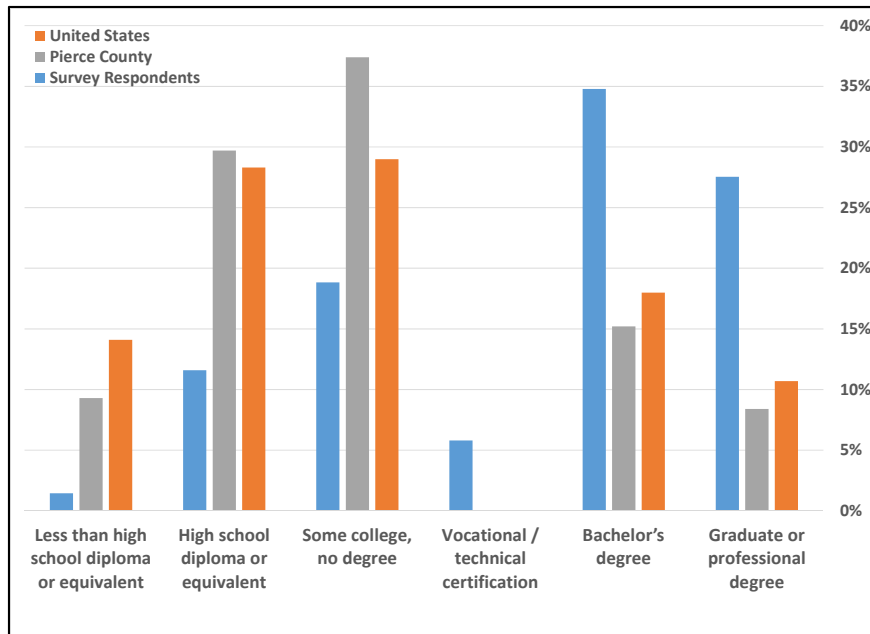
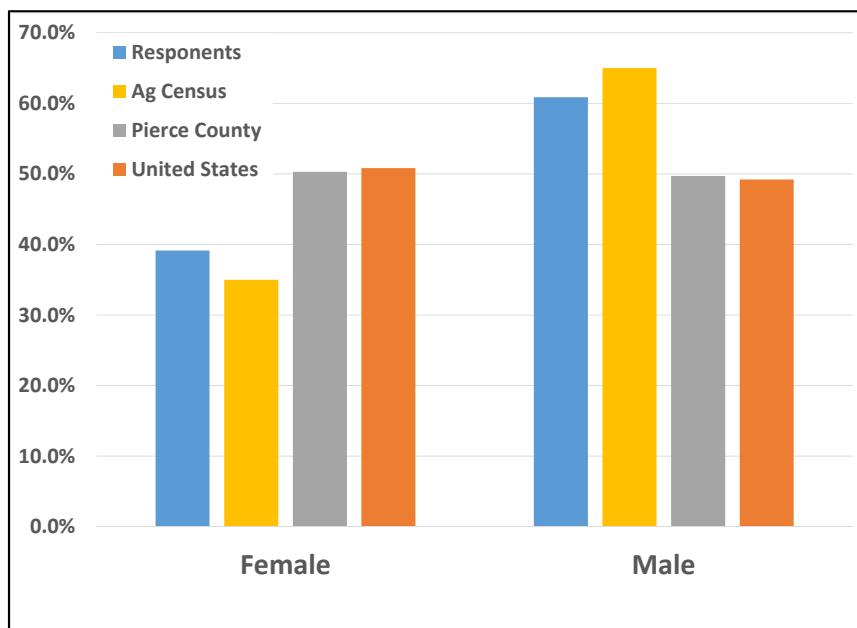


Figure 3 – Comparison of Educational Attainment



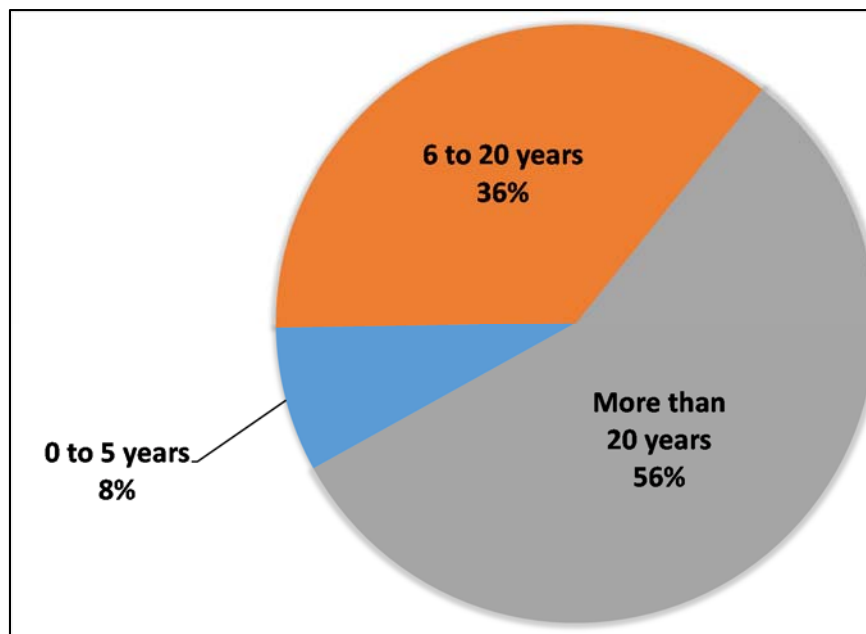
Gender of respondents was more heavily weighted toward males than the general population. Whereas in the U.S. and in Pierce County females constitute a very slight majority of the population (50.8 percent and 50.4 percent respectively), Figure 4 shows that only thirty-nine percent of survey respondents were female. While not consistent with the general population that is a slightly higher proportion than found among principle operators in Pierce County. The Census of Agriculture finds that among all farm operations about thirty-five percent of principle operators are female and sixty-five percent are male.

Figure 4 – Gender of respondents



Survey respondents were not only very well educated, they also had a great deal of experience in agricultural production. Figure 5 shows that over half of the respondents had more than twenty years of experience in agriculture. On average they had been working in agriculture for over twenty-nine years. That finding is similar to findings from the Thurston County survey where respondents reported having worked in agriculture for an average of about twenty-six years, and somewhat higher than the average of twenty-three years found by the Census of Agriculture.

Figure 5 – Farming experience of respondents



Agricultural production in Pierce County has traditionally included a component of part-time vocation farming. The 1954 Census of Agriculture reported that:

“During earlier settlement much logged-over land was sold in 10, 20 and 40 acre plots to part-time farmers. Many of the original 160 acre homesteads near cities were subdivided into smaller farms as the population grew and land prices increased. Suburban farms for poultry, berry and other specialties were purchased by many for operation on a part-time basis. In the higher inland part of the County part-time farming combined with forest industry has made small-farm ownership and residence quite common...Pierce County agriculture is characterized by a large proportion of operators residing on farms and dividing their employment between work on and off the farm...Most of the county might be classified as a region of part-time farming”

That pattern is reflected in survey responses. About forty-one percent of respondents reported they farm full time, with the rest reporting they are part-time or seasonal producers (Figure 6 on the following page). This finding fits well with the 2012 Census of Agriculture finding that forty-seven

percent of respondents to the Census list agriculture as the primary occupation of the principle operator.

Income from agriculture followed a similar pattern. Less than twenty percent of respondents reported earning more than half their income from farming (Figure 7 on the following page), and less than a quarter reported earning \$50,000 or more from farming annually (Figure 8 on the following page). Average gross income from farming was \$479,429, but that included one outlier reporting \$25,000,000 (likely a reporting error). Excluding that outlier, average gross income from agriculture as reported by respondents was \$56,661. It is worth noting that one respondent indicated the income they receive from farming was not the only factor they valued. They suggested that agriculture was a life-style choice. Living on their farm allowed them to live “more sustainably,” which provides them with value that is not monetized.

Figure 6 – Time spent farming

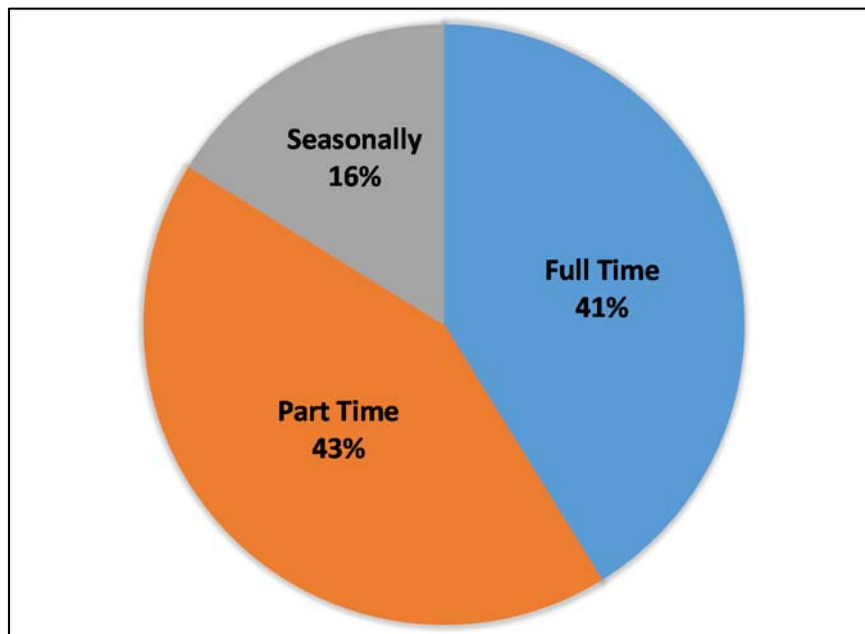


Figure 7 – Portion of household income from farming

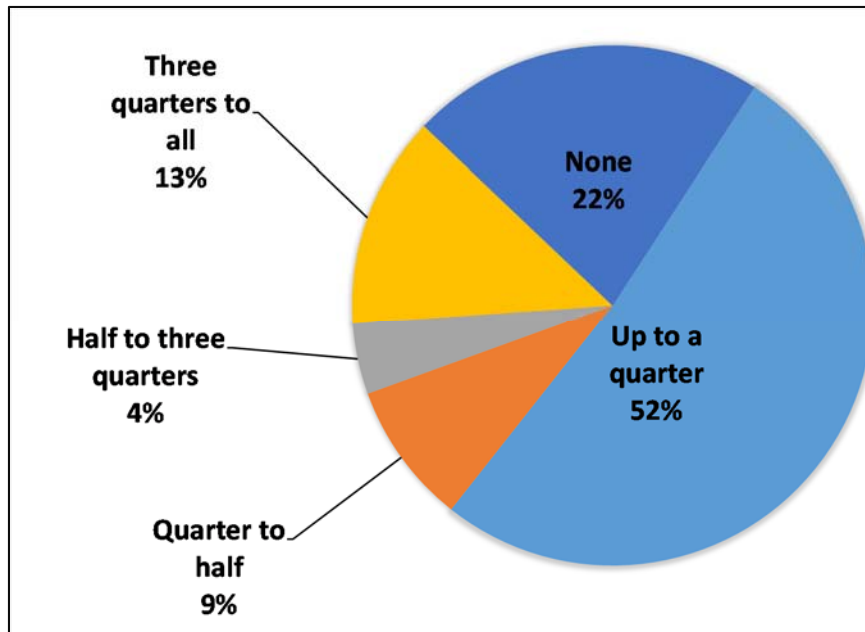
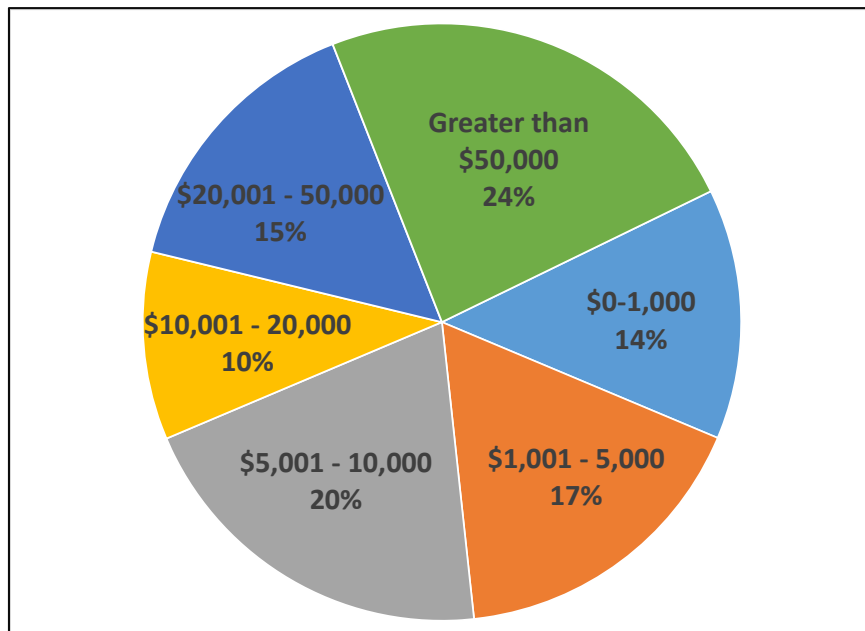


Figure 8 – Income from farming



About Respondent Farm Operations

The vast majority of agricultural producers in Pierce County own the land they use for production. The 2012 Census of Agriculture finds that eighty-eight percent of producers own their land, nine percent own part and lease part, and three percent rent or lease all of their production land. The survey found roughly the same pattern. Eighty two percent of respondents indicated they own their land, fourteen percent own some and lease some, and four percent rent or lease all of their production land (Figure 9). As shown in Table 3 on the following page, as farm operations get larger they are more likely to lease some of the land in production. For farms thirty-five acres and smaller, eighty-seven percent own all of the land they use, whereas of the operations larger than sixty acres, only sixty-six percent own all of the land being used for production.

One respondent indicated their land was owned by a limited liability corporation (LLC), and one indicated their land was owned by a non-profit organization on whose behalf the farm is operated. One respondent indicated they own the land while a land trust owns the development rights in the form of a conservation easement. For those respondents who own their land, most purchased it outright. Eighty-one percent of respondents who own land purchased it, fourteen percent inherited their land and five percent purchased some and inherited the rest (Figure 10 on the following page).

Figure 9 – Farmland tenure

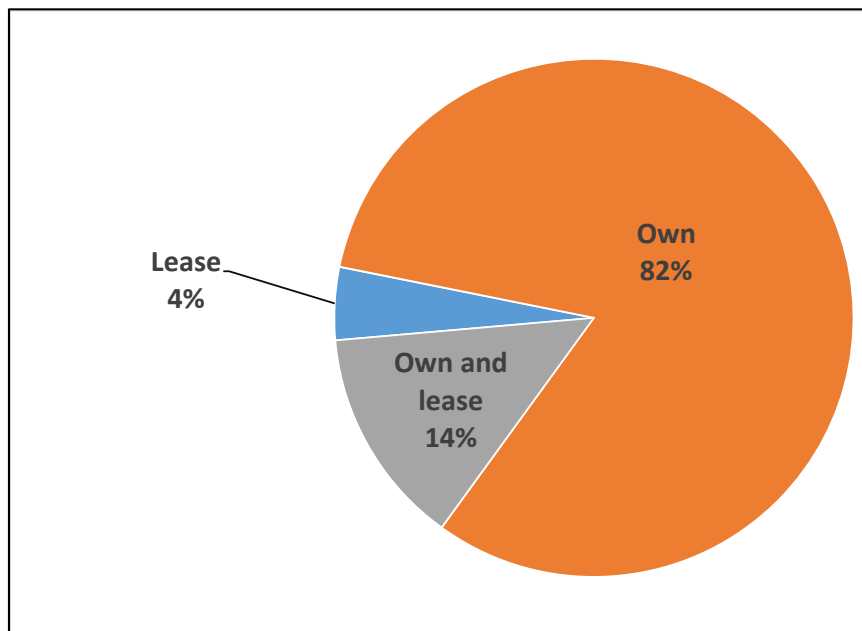


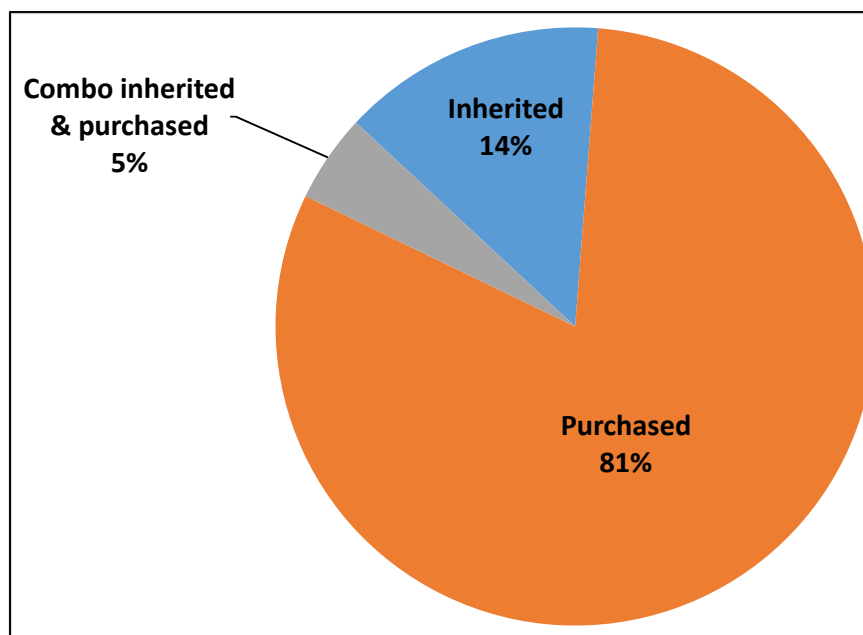
Table 2 – Acres owned and leased

	Acres	
	Total	Average
Owned	2,549.5	45.5
Leased	671.0	33.6

Table 3 – Characteristics of owning and leasing

	Number	Avg. Size	Avg. % owned	
Own	46	51	100%	
Lease	3	48	0%	
Own & Lease	9	86	42%	
				% that only own
1-35 Acres	31	17	93%	87%
36-60 Acres	12	48	76%	83%
60+ Acres	15	142	79%	66%

Figure 10 – Acquisition of farm land



Unlike the Thurston County study which surveyed only fruit and vegetable producers, the Pierce County survey was open to all producers. Accordingly, there were responses from a wide variety of producer types whose production ranged from a few bushels of hops to 250 head of cattle to thousands of pounds of produce. Table 4 on the following page shows the number of producers reporting various

products produced, with about three quarters of respondents indicating they produce more than one product. Three respondents raise only horses. In addition to those listed, a few respondents also reported producing or raising other items such as honey, rabbits and cut flowers. About one third of respondents characterized their operations as “Conventional,” about one third as “Sustainable,” and about one quarter as “Organic” either certified or not yet certified but working toward it (Table 5). A few selected multiple responses, such as both “Conventional” and “Sustainable.”

Table 4 – Variety of respondent production

Cows & cattle	31
Hay	18
Vegetables	15
Fruit	15
Poultry & eggs	14
Goats, sheep & lambs	13
Horses	12
Pigs	5
Trees & nursery stock	5
Pumpkins	5

Table 5 – Type of operation

Conventional	27
Sustainable Production	26
Certified Organic	9
Organic but not certified	8

Respondents reported using a variety of planning documents for their operations, with over one third having a business plan, a farm plan or both. The most common response, however, was the more than forty percent of producers who use no plan to guide their business operations. In addition to the plan types listed in Table 6, a few respondents also reported they use financial plans and/or budgets, as well as product-specific documentation. Some operational guidance is also provided through a variety of certifications. As shown in Table 7 (on the following page), only a few respondents have pursued certifications, with the most common being “Organic.” Others also indicated there are product-specific certifications they have obtained as well as certifications from national associations related to their product.

Table 6 – Planning documents used

Business	23
Farm	28
Marketing	10
Succession/Transfer	6
None	29
Other	7

Table 7 -- Certifications

Organic	9
Salmon-Safe	3
Biodynamic	0
GAP	2
Non-GMO	0
Humane livestock	1
Other	2

Over seventy percent of respondents reported that none of their product is processed (Figure 11). However, there appears to have been some confusion with this series of questions, because one third of respondents who indicated “0%” of their product was processed also responded that either they or a co-packer does the processing. When asked who does the processing, the most common third-party response was “butchers.”

Regardless of whether their products were processed, in terms of their method of delivery, about two thirds of respondents either deliver their product to the final consumer or to an intermediary for processing, or use some combination of delivery and on-farm pick up. The remainder use only on-farm pick up (Figure 12 on the following page).

Figure 11 -- Portion of product that is processed

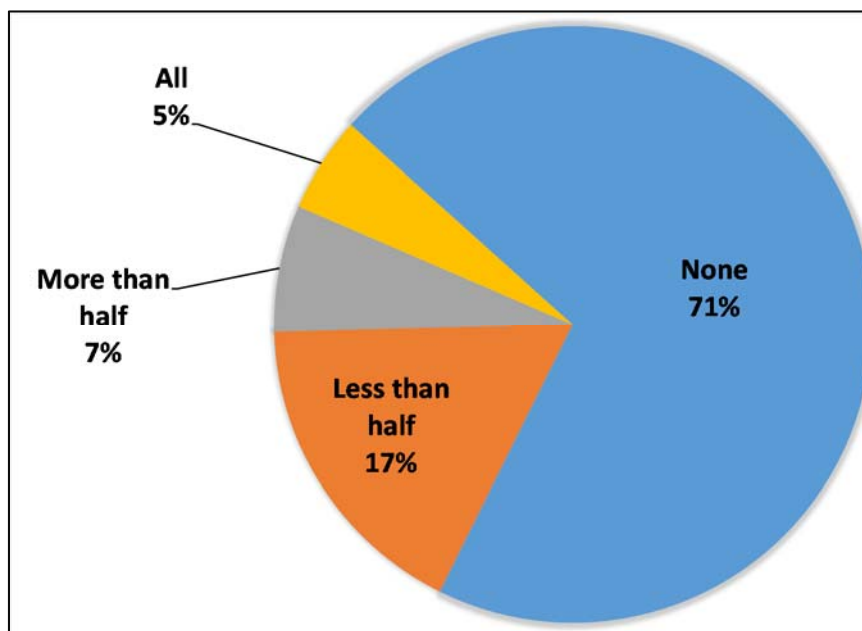
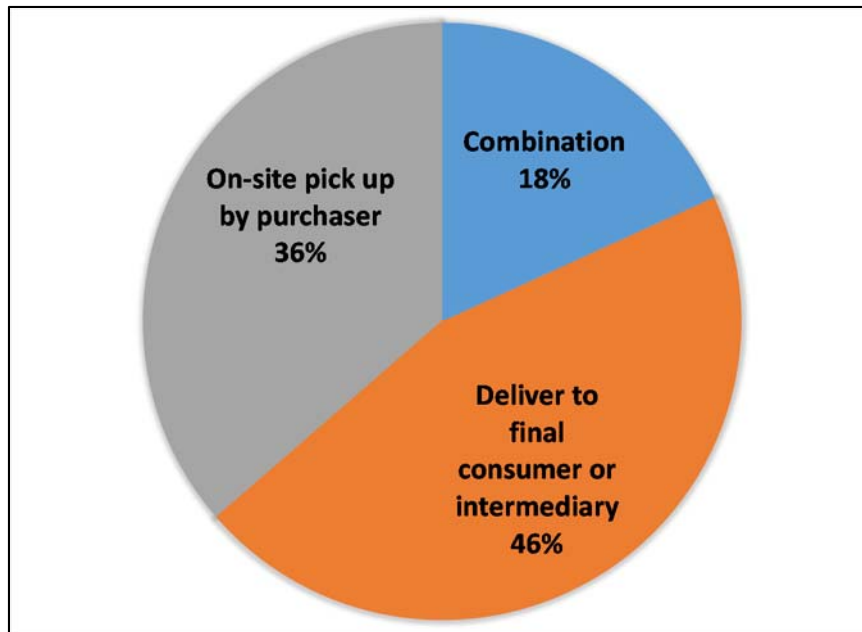


Figure 12 – Method of delivery to consumer



When asked what “local” means to them, respondents had a wide variety of answers which were grouped into six categories. Three quarters of respondents indicated they consider “local” to mean some area either within fifty miles or less or within the greater Puget Sound region. Most considered it to mean within Washington state, with a few considering anything within Washington, Oregon or Idaho to be “local” (Figure 13). Regardless of their definition of “local,” the vast majority of respondents indicated they sell most of their products into the local market (see Figure 14 on the following page; also, Figure 33 on page 39 shows what “local” means to purchasers).

Figure 13 – To producers, “local” means...

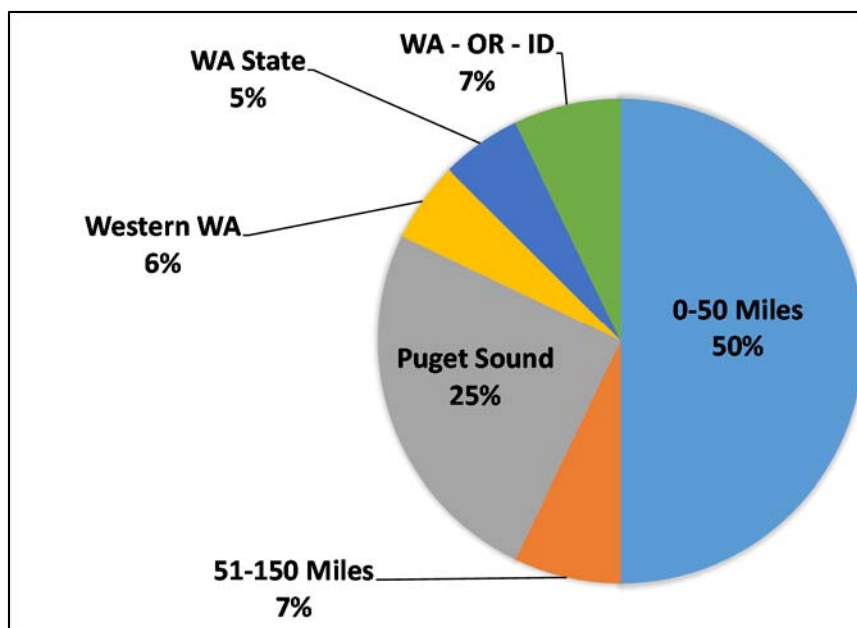
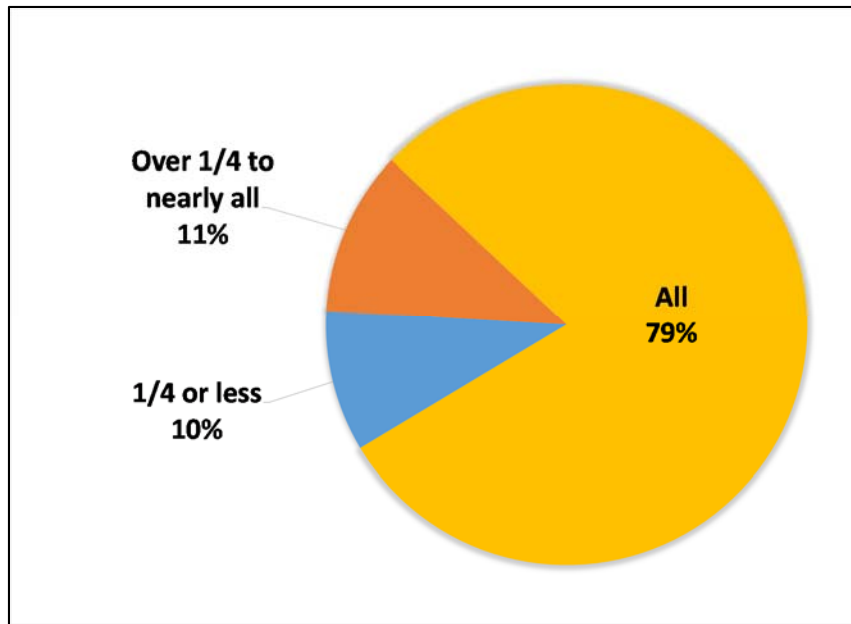


Figure 14 – Percent of products sold locally



One survey question asked about how products are sold. Something about how the question was formatted or presented seemed to cause some confusion in respondents, and as a result the responses are not reliable enough to present. However, among interview participants there was substantial discussion about farmers markets. There was almost universal agreement that rather than trying to create more markets, efforts should be directed at making current markets more successful. There were very strong impressions that there are not enough farmers to serve the existing set of markets, and adding markets would only dilute sales. Also, it is very difficult, especially for small farmers, to staff a market all day and make a profit. They need to weigh the income potential associated with attending a market against the productivity lost due to spending that time on the farm. One producer suggested that it may be helpful for farmers markets to purchase goods from producers, similar to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) transaction, and the market handle sales to consumers, allowing producers to stick to what they do best.

The most common marketing strategy used by respondents is “word of mouth” (see Table 8 on the following page). Many respondents commented that they have worked hard to develop a reputation for the quality of their product or service, or the uniqueness of their product, and they use that reputation as their main marketing strategy. Some respondents also use their own farm-specific websites and marketing channels provided by industry or trade groups. But even then, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that establishing and maintaining relationships based on trust and quality products is the most important marketing strategy.

Few respondents indicated they use any on-line tools for marketing, with the most common being a listing in the Puget Sound Fresh guide (see Table 9 on the following page). For livestock producers a common marketing channel reported was “auctions.” A few respondents also mentioned “bartering” and “direct marketing” without further elaboration.

When asked about the effectiveness of a range of marketing methods, respondents ranked those methods that were most personal the highest, with mass-media channels ranked the lowest. In the comments associated with this question, the preference for reliance on reputation and avoidance of most other methods was reinforced (figure 15 on the following page, and Figure 16 on page 21). Aside from “word of mouth,” the only other method of marketing seen as effective was a combination of email, website and blogs, with a smaller majority seeing some effectiveness from social media. Interview respondents did see some value in the Puget Sound Fresh Farm Guide, and noted they got customers because of being included. Several also mentioned that it would be helpful to have some assistance and low-cost options for developing and maintaining an on-line presence.

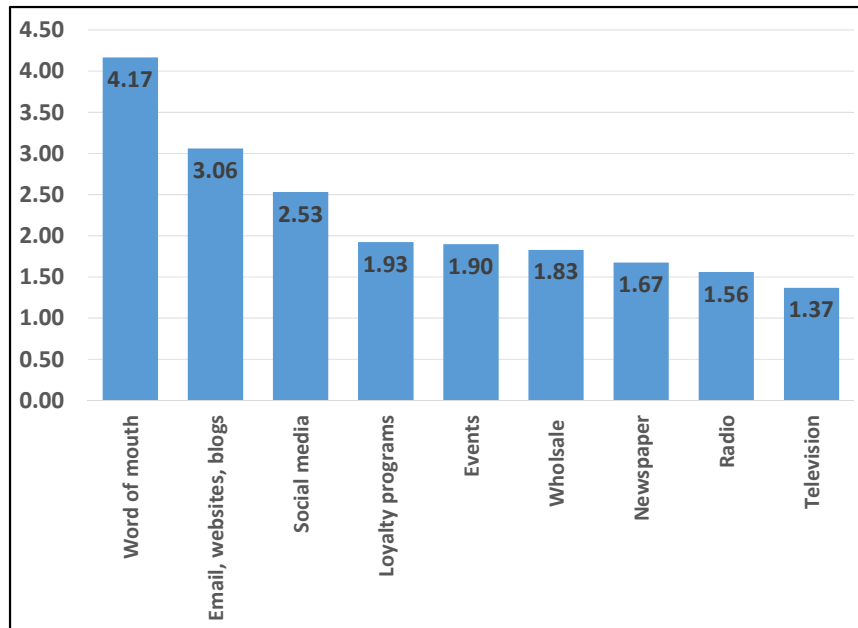
Table 8 – Number using various marketing strategies

Word of mouth	29
Web site	11
Signs and billboards	8
Facebook	6
Craig's List	5
Farmers market	5
Auction	5
Mail	3
Farm guide	2
Radio	2
CSA	2

Table 9 – Number using other online tools

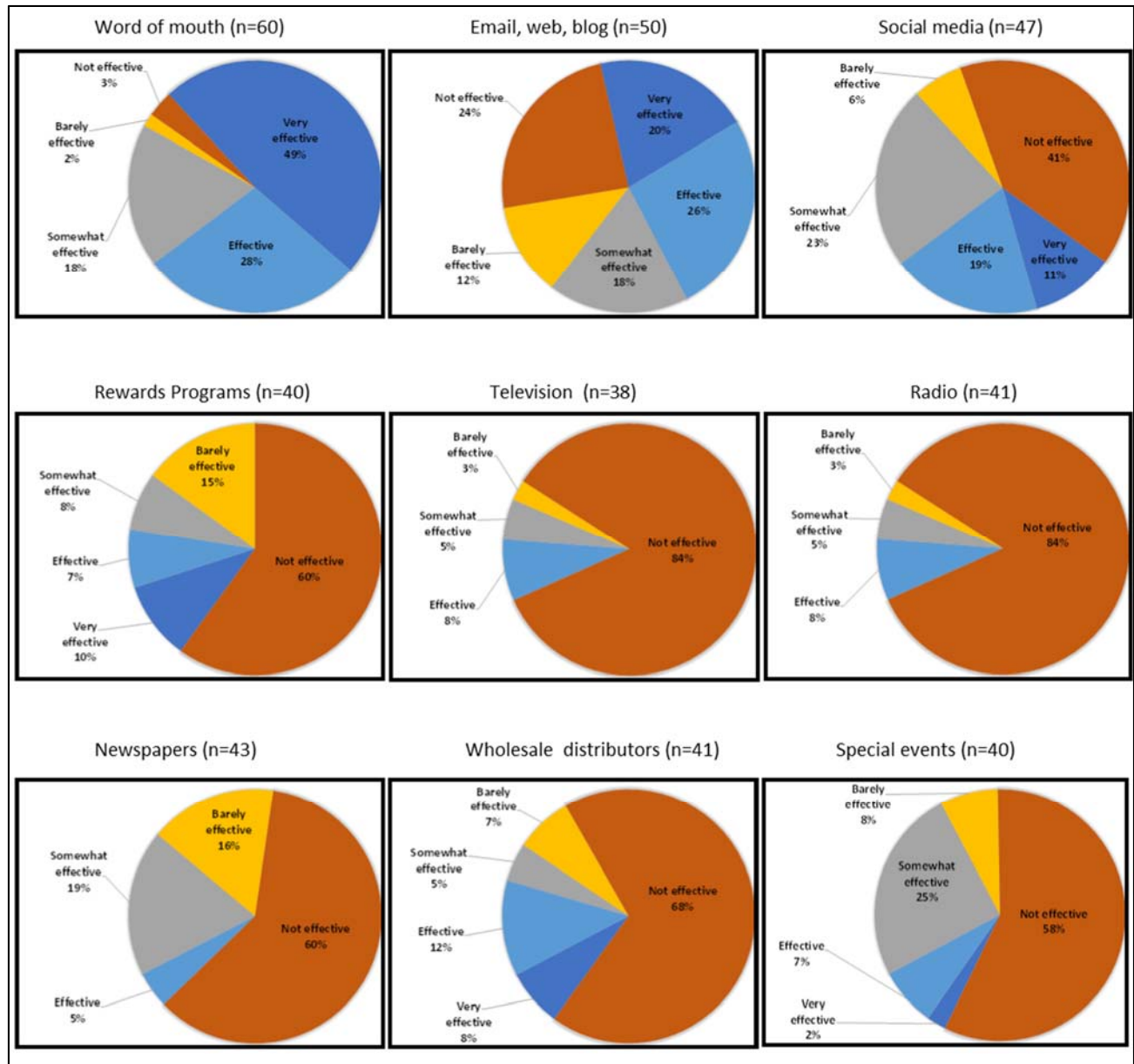
FoodHub	0
LocalHarvest	4
LocalOrbit	0
Local Food Marketplace	0
Puget Sound Fresh	9
Farmigo	1
Farmster	0
None	35

Figure 15 – Average scores for marketing method effectiveness



Responses to the question about the effectiveness of marketing methods were re-coded such that “Not effective” = 1 and “Very effective” = 5, and average scores for each factor were then computed.

Figure 16 – Effectiveness of marketing tactics



“Expenses” was the top answer when respondents were asked “what is the biggest challenge on your farm operation?” Taken together with “cash flow” and “income,” producers clearly indicated financial issues represent their biggest challenge. Other notable challenges included “weather,” “labor” and “government regulation” (Table 10).

Table 10 – Biggest challenges to operations

Expenses	10
Weather	8
Labor	7
Government regulation	7
Time	6
Land	5
Government taxes	5
Income	4
Hay/grass	4
Cash flow	4
Business development	4
Transportation to market	3
Drainage	3
Urban development	2
Elk	2

Two thirds of respondents indicated they have no interest in expanding their current operations (figure 17). For the one third that are interested in expanding, the majority would finance the expansion through loans repaid from farm income and some injection of personal savings. A few would look for grants (Figure 18 on the following page). Accordingly, the biggest obstacles to expansion were perceived to be “price of land” and “profitability of farming” – the amount to be financed is too high given the limited ability to earn enough from the land for debt service (figure 19 on the following page). The lack of available financing, and the lack of available land, especially in proximity to current operations were also common responses.

Figure 17 – Interest in expanding with more land

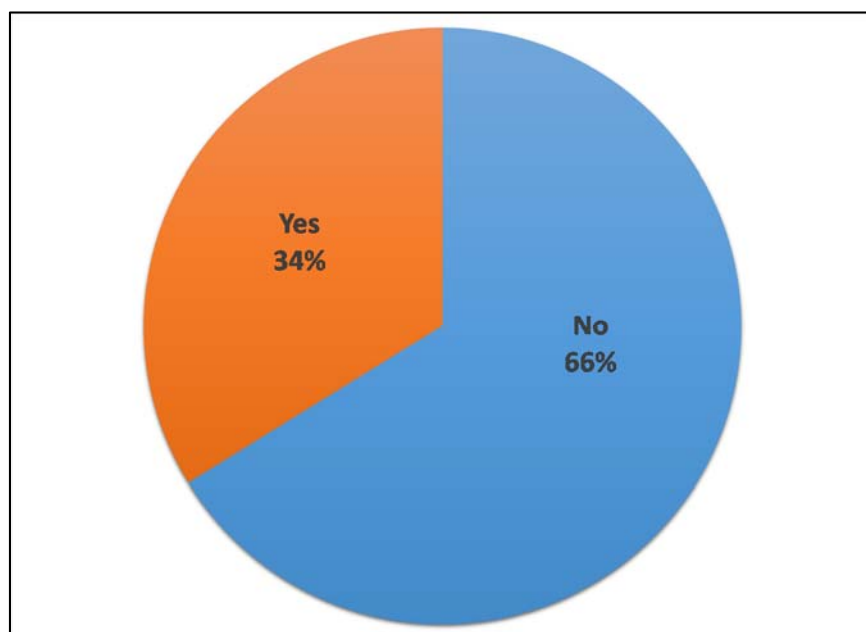


Figure 18 – How will expansion be financed?

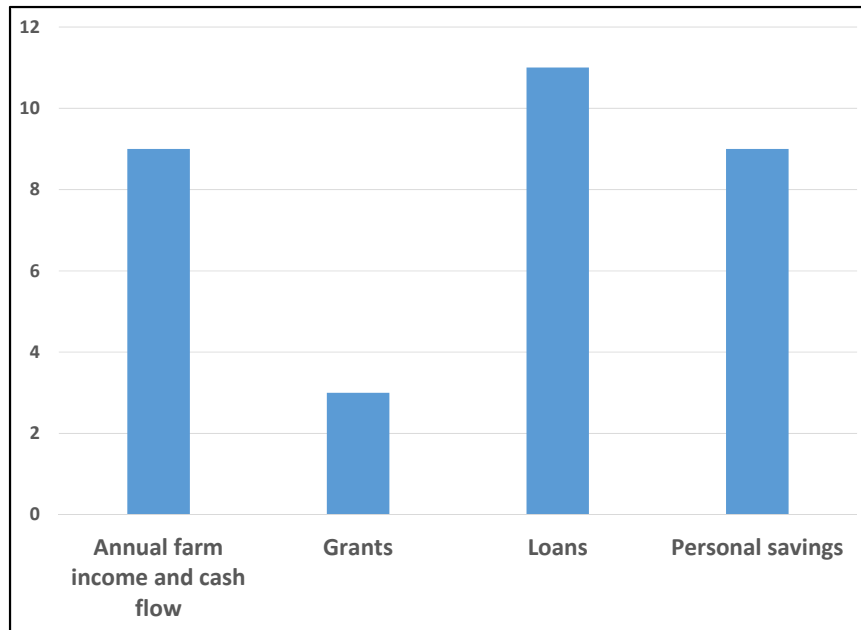
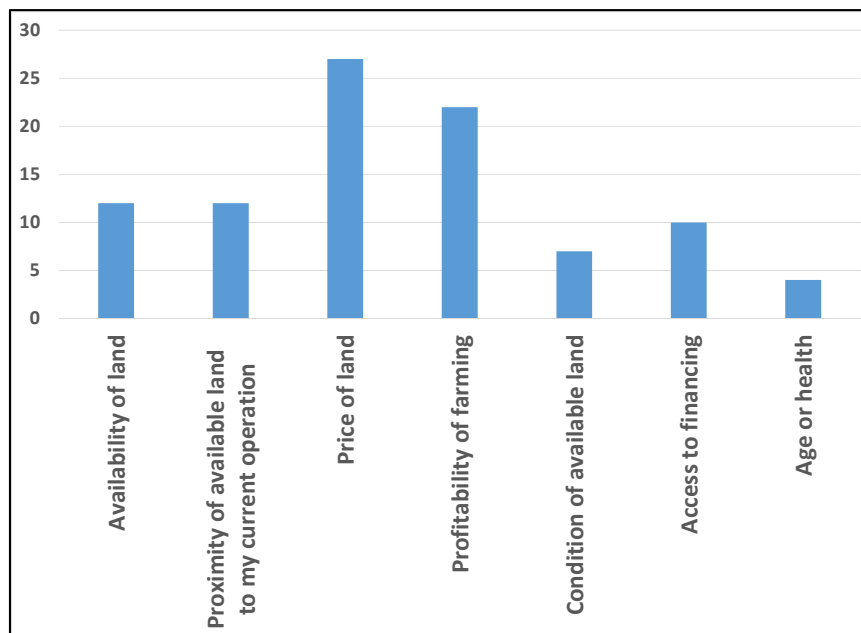


Figure 19 – Factors preventing expansion



Just over half of respondents indicated their land is “affected by drainage issues” (Figure 20 on the following page). When asked what could be done to alleviate drainage problems, there were thirty-two responses, fifteen of which mentioned maintaining or installing drainage ditches or “drain tiles.” Several respondents mentioned that Pierce County Public Works is not helpful in finding solutions, and that any

solutions that are found are beyond what agricultural operations can afford. The Pierce Conservation District was cited as having been helpful. Over three quarters of respondents noted that flooding is not a problem for them (Figure 21). Flooding in some cases is related to drainage issues, in that some report flooding not associated with rivers or streams. The main incompatibilities are flooded pasture land restricting forage opportunities for livestock and the inability to get on to crop land in the spring to start preparing the land for planting.

Figure 20 – Operations with drainage issues

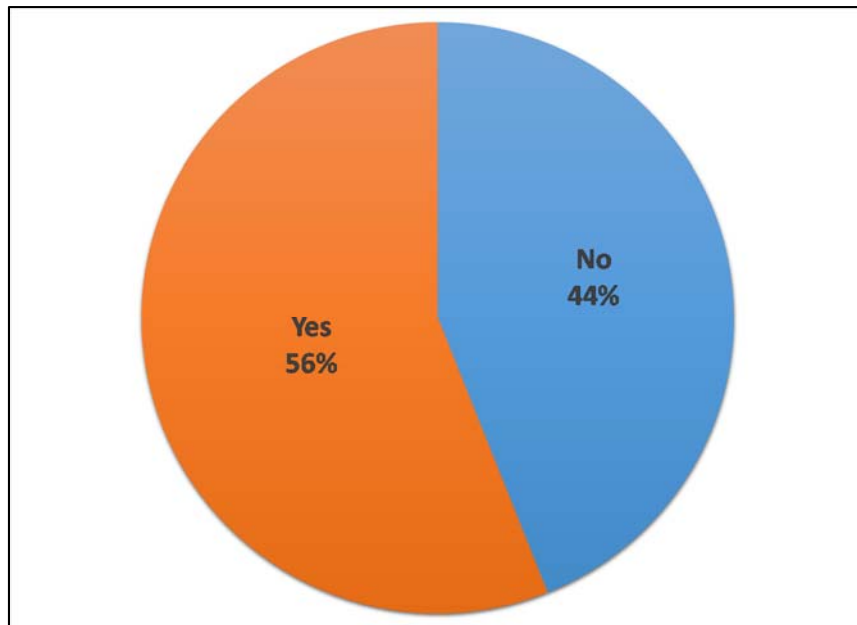
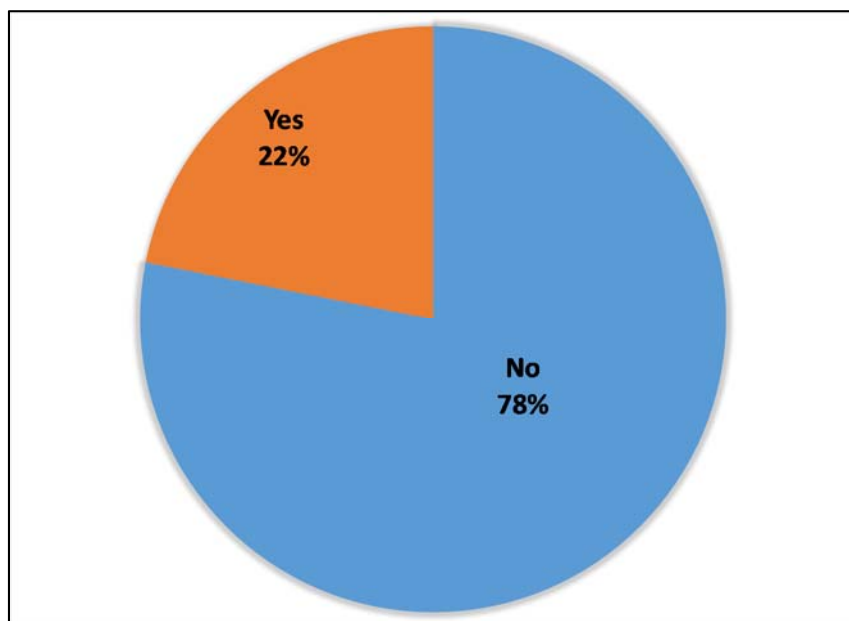


Figure 21 – Operations with flooding issues



Respondents were asked, “What is the one thing you would buy, build or expand upon for your farm operation tomorrow if you had the capacity and the financing?” Twenty nine people responded, with ten mentioning structures such as covered areas for livestock or a commercial kitchen, six mentioning improved production or processing equipment, three mentioning more land, and then a variety of other answers were given, ranging from fencing to starting a winery.

When asked about other needs, gaps or suggestions, respondents offered the following comments:

Table 11 – Other needs, gaps and suggestions

Pierce county's Personal Property Tax for business and property taxes for a farm property are a killer.
Better connections with WSU
As new landowners, its hard to know what we are/are not allowed to do per county regulations. Hesitant to ask for help if we are going to be told "no" or fined.
Too many rules, ask people who farm about how your rules affect them. People who live in town have no clue what it takes to farm.
High cost of alfalfa due to overseas buyers has made it tough on the locals
R&I, GAP paper work too much
The need to promote open forage for pollinators on open/county /private land
Pierce County should acquire development rights of open agricultural properties and compensate owners properly
water running alongside the ditches either side of 288th st E. is torrential in the winter - often flooding the road near mountain highway. though our properties along the road from our place to the mtn. highway are on the flat and were once wetlands, they are now mostly pasture - very boggy pasture. some of this is not drained well. it seems to me that a pond on these properties would better serve landowners as well as wildlife - instead of running off down the ditches or being polluted by animal waste and seeping into water tables.
my hay goes to waste. although not nutritious enough for horses, can be used for cattle, sheep, etc. i suggest we need a government willing to work FOR the people's good instead of focusing on political agendas.
property taxes always a concern
People stealing and cutting of fences
commonly accepted knowledge of difference (qualitative) between factory farms and small artisinal farms. i can't compete with large scale farmer prices and find myself having to make a case for quality.
Limited funds for capital improvements like new fencing, fencing repair upgrade. Limited funds for invasive species removal such as reed canary grass, scotch broom, blackberry. Lack of help, regulations to accomplish above. Lack of funds to buy/replace farm equipment.
we need programs and services to help farmers transition their lands into conservation easements that couple land use for agriculture with re-wilding practices
county needs more reasonable land tax structure
Wildlife issues (fencing out elk and deer). Competing with media's anti-conventional farming agenda, public ignorance/misinformation. Out-of-county competition (nursery stock coming from Canada is high-volume and subsidized).
Prohibitive permitting and restrictions for cottage food home processing in King County (septic rules are very unclear).
legal, broker and other fees associated with land acquisition are a huge set back.
More need of local farm support infrastructure (organic input sellers, ag lime truck applicator, local irrigaiton supply)

Respondents were asked how limiting a number of factors were to their operations. “Regulations,” “Weather,” “Financing and Capital” and “Labor” were regarded as the most limiting factors (Figure 22 on the following page and Figure 23 on page 24). Interview respondents supported those comments,

with many commenting that labor is a very big problem that is likely to get worse, and that Pierce County is awful to work with when it comes to getting permits for farm structures.

Figure 22 – Limiting Factors

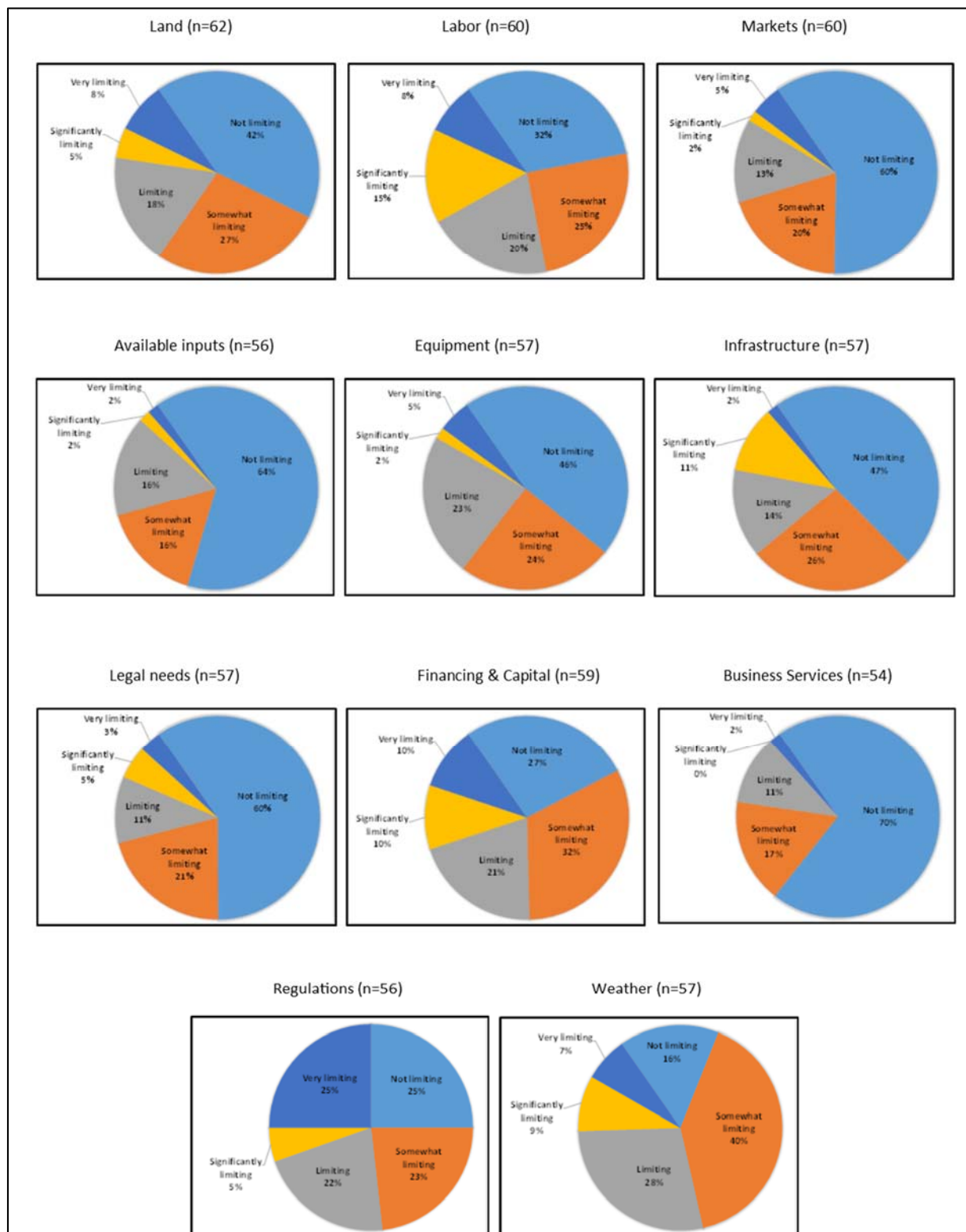
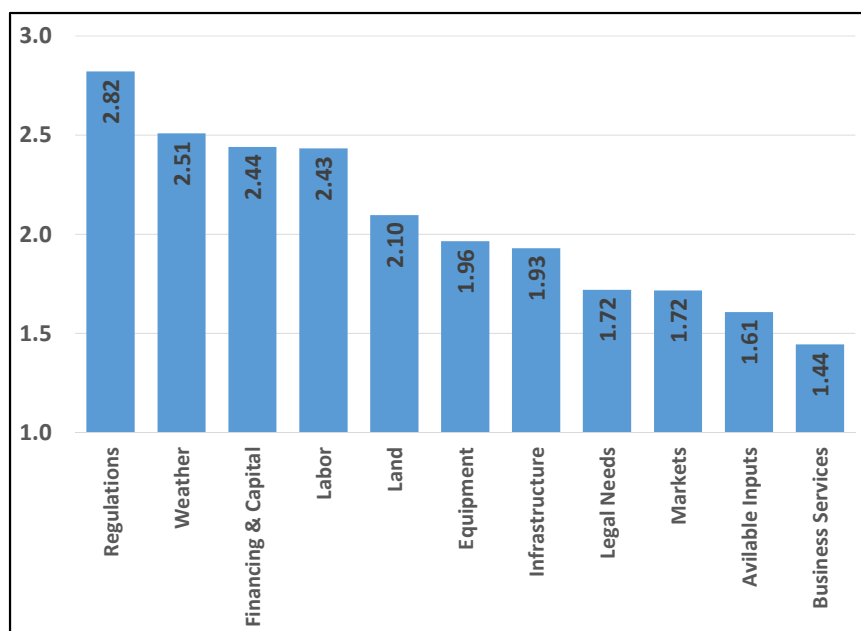


Figure 23 – Limiting factors average score



Responses to the question about limiting factors were re-coded such that “Not limiting” = 1 and “Very limiting” = 5, and average scores for each factor were then computed.

Respondents were asked if they needed any infrastructure to support a variety of post-production functions. Only thirteen respondents indicated they need supporting infrastructure, but those that did chose multiple options (Figure 24 on the following page). In interviews, needs ranged from general farm supply stores to help with haying to sources for livestock breeding. Tractor implements and repair services were also mentioned, both in terms of a lack of available options locally and the associated costs, especially for new farmers. They were also asked if they are engaged in any cooperative efforts, with seventy-eight percent indicating they are not (Figure 25 on page 29). Of those who chose to describe the cooperative efforts in which they participate, several mentioned industry associations particular to their product, along with a variety of other efforts (Table 12 on page 29).

When asked if they would consider aggregating or joint-marketing their products, forty-two percent responded “No,” ten percent responded “Yes” and forty eight percent indicated they would need more information before making a choice (Figure 26 on page 30). Of those who showed some interest in aggregating or joint marketing, about two thirds currently deliver their product to the final consumer or to an intermediary. Of the seven indicating they are definitely interested in joint marketing efforts, two are already involved in some type of cooperative effort. For those who said yes, they see a definite benefit to working with others with similar interests. For those who said no, they were either in the process of exiting the market; they have all the customers they feel they can serve already, or; they feel their product is unique enough that the possible benefits are outweighed by the complications of joining an organization and protecting their brand. For those who felt the need to learn more about joint efforts, there were concerns about joining an organization – needing to know who the partners would be; retaining control of branding and messaging, and; some operators feel they are too small at the moment to find benefit from cooperative efforts.

Following in the same vein, respondents were asked if they would be interested in sharing a variety of infrastructure and business services with other farms. The greatest interest was in sharing “Farming expertise” and “Marketing strategies,” with some interest in sharing machinery and equipment (Figures 27 and 28 on pages 31 and 32). As with partnering in aggregating or joint marketing, respondents expressed concerns about vagaries and complications of working with others and wanted to know more about the possibilities before answering affirmatively. People participating in follow-up interviews added some detail. Regarding “food hubs” in particular, interview respondents saw them as a good way to sell excess product and to even out the ups and downs of product harvest. Meat producers were less likely to be interested, most feeling that food hubs are best suited for selling fruits and vegetables.

Figure 24 – Needed supporting infrastructure

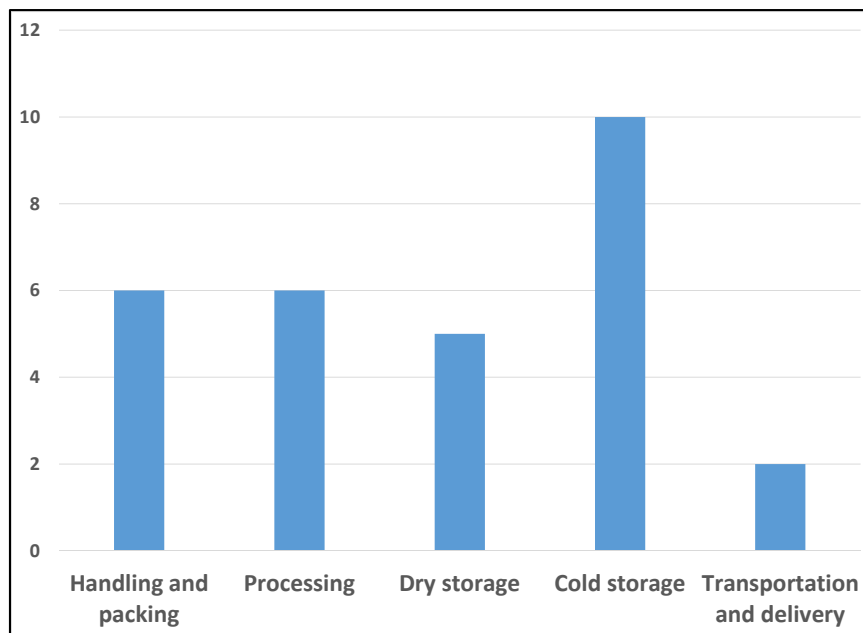


Figure 25 – Percent engaged in cooperative efforts

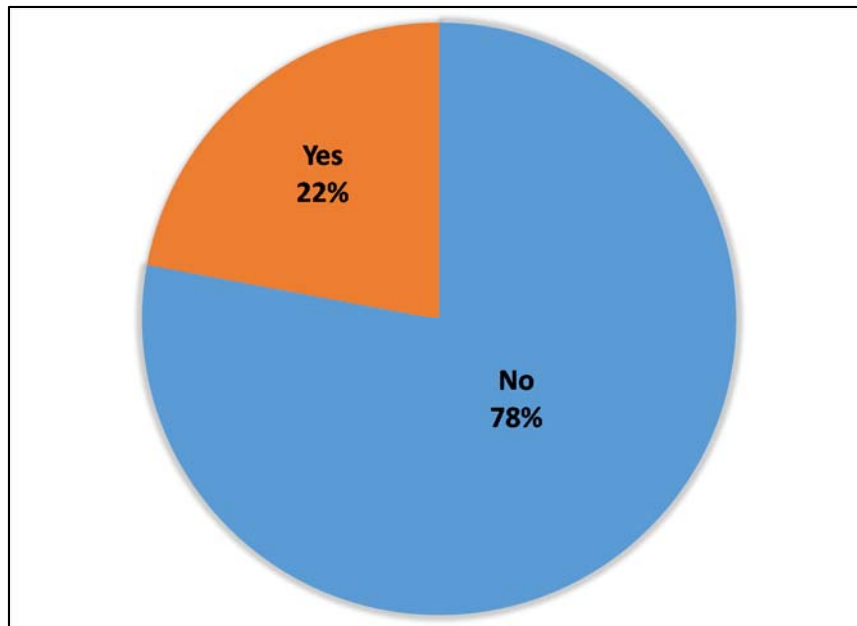


Table 12 – Types of cooperative efforts

Work with local farmers for hay processing
with non profits
christmas tree association
informal networking of similar businesses
No, but planning to do so this year with Gig Harbor waterfront farmers market and Haggen grocery.
Puget Sound Meat Producers Cooperative (provides USDA inspected slaughter operating mobile slaughter unit).
cooperative barter events
terra organics, more or less a foodhub
Our neighbor sells us cattle + over winters them for use of our pastures which he uses for rotation with his own herd and pastures.
haying
Attempting to collaborate with Enumclaw/Plateau/Visit Rainier area farmers
not officially, but working with neighbors
Farmer markets marketing
Beef cattle association marketing program, auctioneers

Figure 26 – Interest in aggregating or joint marketing

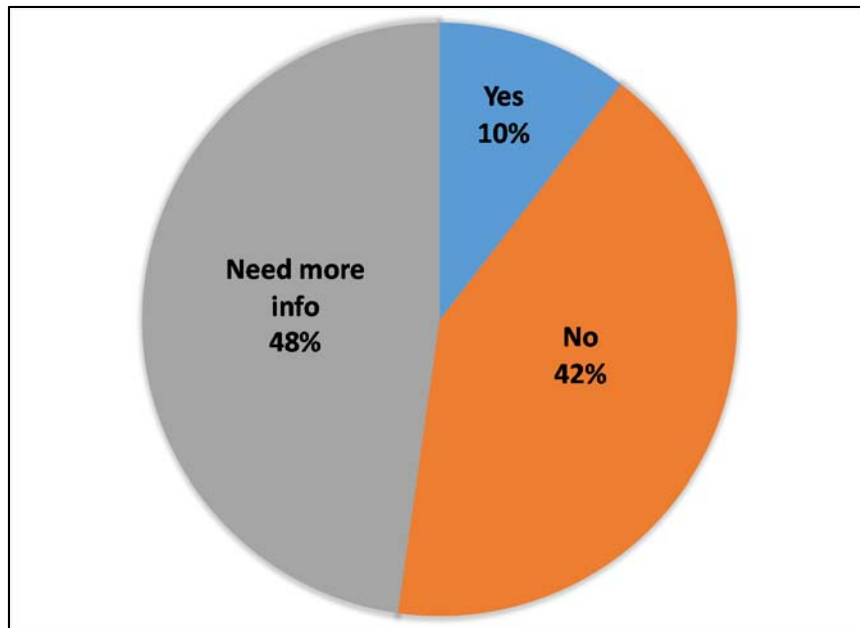


Figure 27 – Interest in sharing with other farm operations

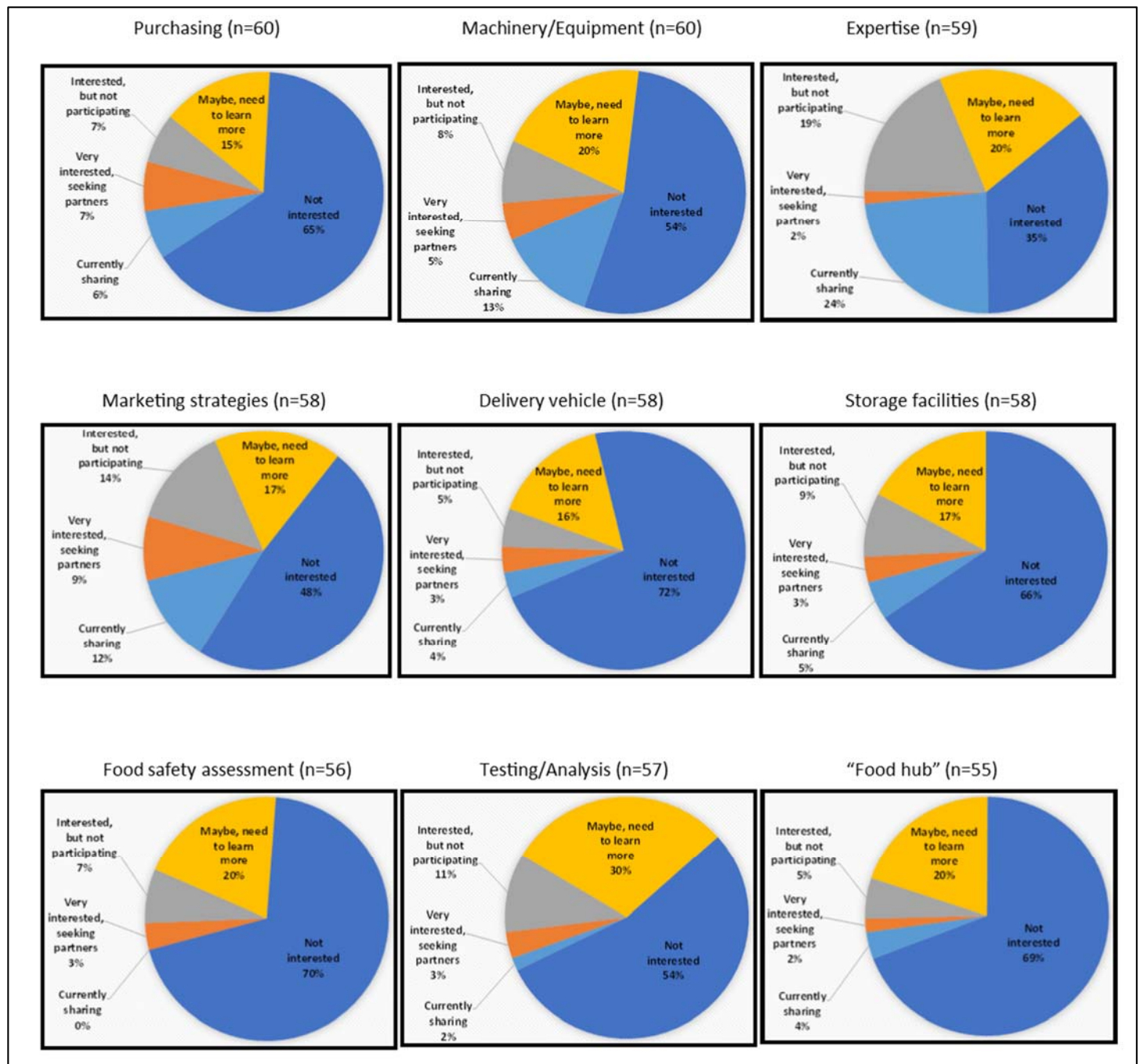
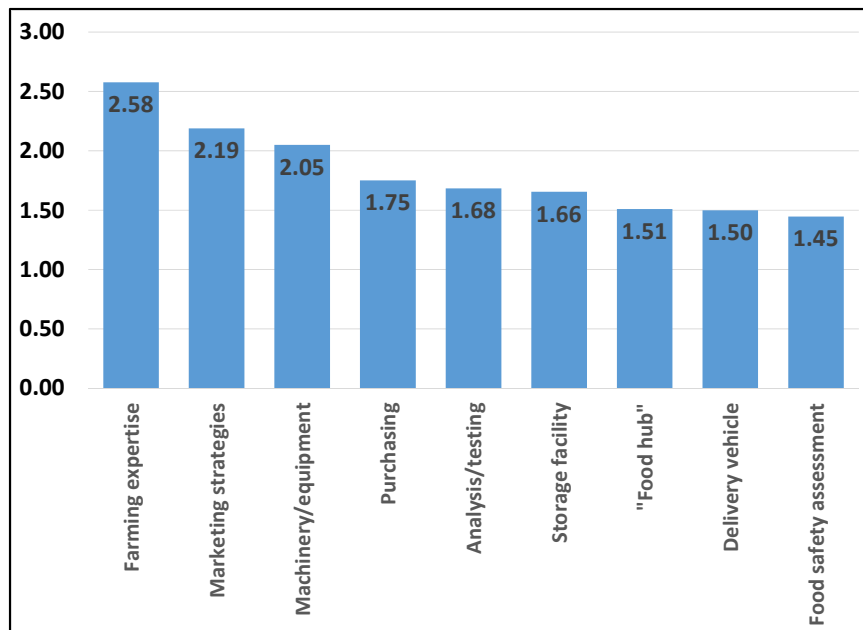


Figure 28 – Average interest in sharing infrastructure and services



Responses to the question about sharing infrastructure and services were re-coded such that "Not interested" = 1 and "currently sharing" = 5, and average scores for each item were then computed.

Finally, respondents were asked which services, if any, offered by several different entities, they had used. Nearly half indicated they had used services provided by Washington State University, and about half also indicated they had used services from the Pierce Conservation District. Additionally, ten responded they had used the services of the Pierce County Agriculture Program, and sixteen had used the services of the Natural Resources Conservation Service/United State Department of Agriculture. Interview respondents that had used NRCS services were generally positive, although many mentioned that grant amounts were often very small relative to the need, and that paperwork was very burdensome. Not all respondents listed the service they had used. The variety of services used are presented in Tables 13 through 16 below and on the following pages.

Table 13 – WSU services used

Plant pest problems, avian lab
brought vegetables to be looked at for a problem I was having
avian lab
poultry diagnostic lab
cattle handling, breeding nutritional
soil analysis, tree management, plant selection
land testing
X-mas trees and tree farming
Farm Finder
plant lab
4H and livestock advisors

insect/disease identification / tree research results
sheep and poultry illness analysis
success in agriculture class
seminars, workshops, bulletins (my farm has hosted WSU Extension workshops for fruit tree pruning and orchard renovation)
fruit tree workshops, chicken mobile units, lots of online information
Crop growing information
WSDA Pesticide Programs
plant clinic
Cultivating Success, Women In Ag, tours, newsletters, WADDL Lab, etc.
disease id clinic, staff expertise
PAST----PEST MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE
women in ag, other events
soil, Cultivating success
4-h , testing animal blood,

Table 14 – Conservation District services used

Poultry processing equip., farm plan consult, plant sale
soil testing, chicken processer
volunteers come out to clean the Wilkeson Creek and will grant them access to the creek
poultry processing unit
roof rainwater runoff, manure collection and removal
soil testing
fencing, sacrifice areas, compost bins
general info
suggestions Re: Control of noxious weeds
forage development
soil testing
farm plan
help in open space designation on parts of land
USDA forest and ag
soil testing, site visit consultations
soil analysis
training for water quality monitoring - i collect data on my farm's silver creek for PCD
soil testing, pasture workshops, plant sale
native border planting
A walk thru plan for drainage which we followed
purchased trees
Tours, classes, newsletters, events
soil testing
Soil testing
SOIL TESTING; poultry processing equipment, Leasing greenhouse space
Staff got us a new fence
on site visit
Land soil testing

Table 15 – Pierce County Agriculture Program services used

cost share on manure storage
attended farm forum
seminars
farm plan manure management
PC Farm Forum, etc.
Farm Forum
PC TV

Table 16 – NRCS/USDA services used

NRCS hightunnel grant
advice
Scrapie Program
bertsville bee lab
fence project protect wetland
forest and ag
farm plan, eqip programs
inquired of tree service
Webinars, newsletters, etc.
high tunnel, soil survey
EQUIP
The aforementioned fence; property also conserved with NRCS funding
EQUIP

PART 2 – PURCHASERS

About the Survey

Coincident with the survey of producers, a second survey sought information from commercial and institutional food purchasers regarding their purchasing decisions and behaviors. The survey was also posted on SurveyMonkey and included twenty-eight questions, most of which were open ended. After leaving the survey open for several months, a total of twenty-seven usable responses were received.

About the Respondents

Respondents to the purchasers' survey came from as far north as Kirkland and as far south as Eatonville (Figure 29). As with the producer survey, it is not known if the zip-code areas reported were for home or establishment locations. They represented a variety of food purchasers, with the largest share coming from restaurants (Figure 30). All of the respondents were business owners or top-level executives such as Directors, General Managers or Program Managers. Respondents had been in their current position for an average of thirteen and three-quarters years.

Figure 29 – Respondent locations

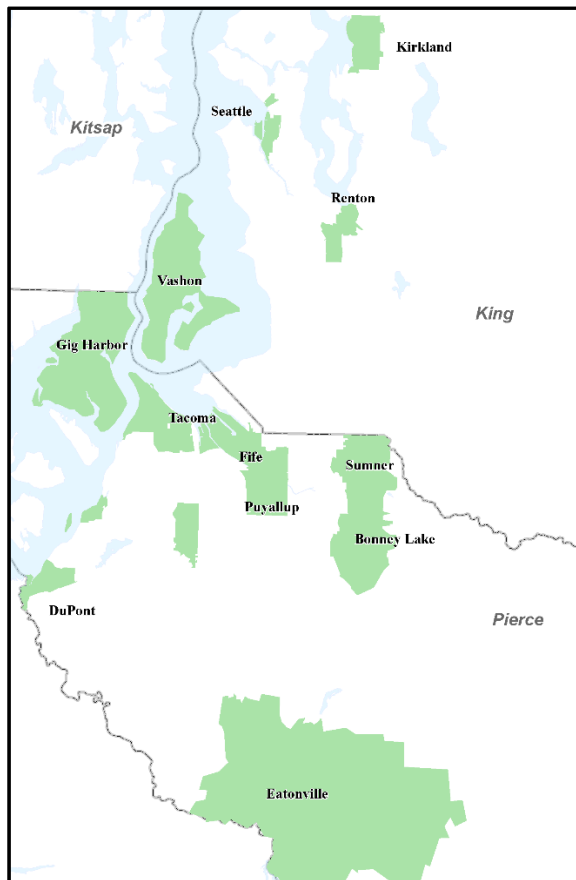
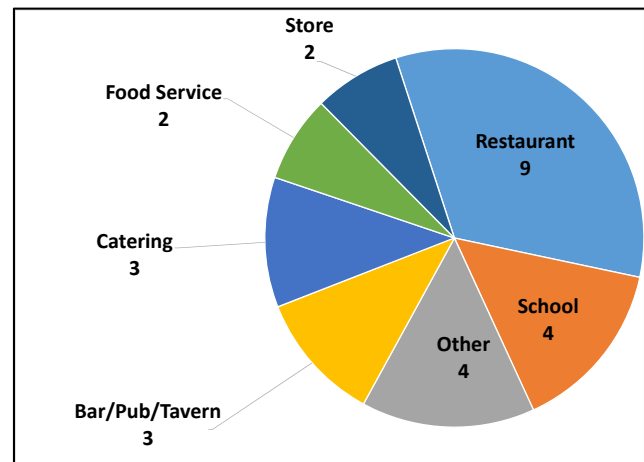


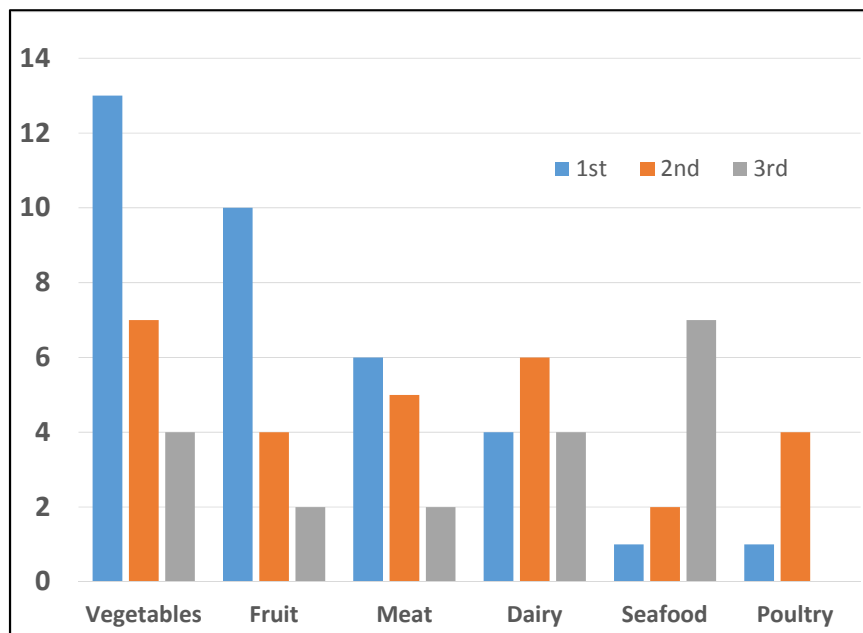
Figure 30 – Type of food purchaser



About Respondent Purchasing

Respondent purchasing of food covered a wide spectrum of buying behavior. From one case per day of onions to over a ton of meat per week, respondents had widely differing procurement needs. Over half of respondents indicated they do purchase locally, when available. However, definitions of “local” vary from that of the producers. Respondents were asked what food items they purchase most frequently. Fruits and vegetables were reported as the most commonly purchased items, followed by meat and dairy, with fish and seafood purchases third (Figure 31).

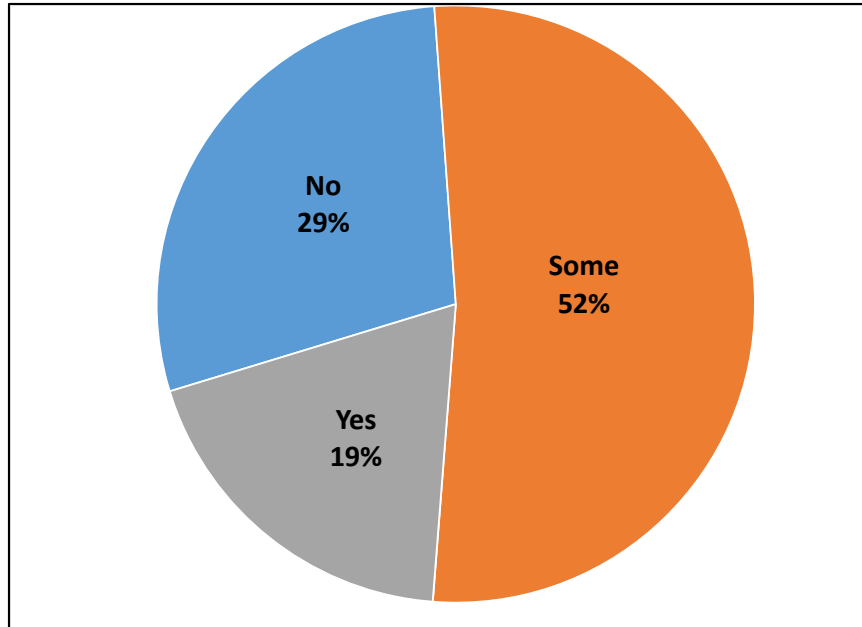
Figure 31 – Most commonly purchased food items



Respondents were asked what certifications or assurances they require producers to have before they will buy from them. There were a variety of answers, but little consistency. Many mentioned that vendors must have a business license and product liability insurance, and several require at least a Health-Department-issued food handler’s permit. A few also mentioned Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and organic certifications are preferred.

When asked if they require any amount of pre-processing of raw products, over seventy-percent indicated they need at least some level of processing of the foods they purchase (Figure 32 on the following page). This was especially the case for meat, poultry and seafood, with every purchaser that mentioned those products indicating they needed it to be processed in some way. For purchasers of fruits and vegetables, they didn’t necessarily require pre-processing, but for many it does make things simpler and more convenient.

Figure 32 – Purchasers that require some pre-processing



When asked what they consider “local” in terms of food production, buyers indicated a much larger area than producers. While half of producers consider “local” to mean from within 50 miles or less, almost half of purchasers consider local to mean from within Washington State, and another quarter think products from anywhere in the northwestern states are local (Figure 33 on the following page).

Several survey questions touched on aspects of local purchasing behaviors and preferences. All respondents indicated they purchase a combination of local and non-local foods, with a few also purchasing food imported into the United States. Most make between one and twenty-five percent of their purchases from local producers, with less than ten percent purchasing more than half of their food items from local sources (Figure 34 on the following page). Despite those purchasing patterns, over half responded to at least one question that they would like to purchase everything from local producers. Many also expressed they prefer to buy from producers with ethical, humane and sustainable production practices. Respondents did not show any preference for which products they would like to purchase locally.

While respondents desire to purchase more locally-produced food items, they have business needs that must be satisfied before they are able to do so. The most frequently mentioned requirements are price and availability (Figure 35 on page 40). Purchasers have cost thresholds they must meet and paying a premium for locally-produced food is not always an available option. They also require a consistently-available supply of product. In addition to having items consistently available at or below a price point affordable to each purchaser, the ordering and delivery of items needs to meet or exceed the convenience and dependability of commercial distributors who work with products from local as well as non-local sources. Some purchasers require contracts and delivery guarantees for all purchases, regardless of the vendor, highlighting the need for dependable product availability and delivery.

Figure 33 – To purchasers, “local” means...

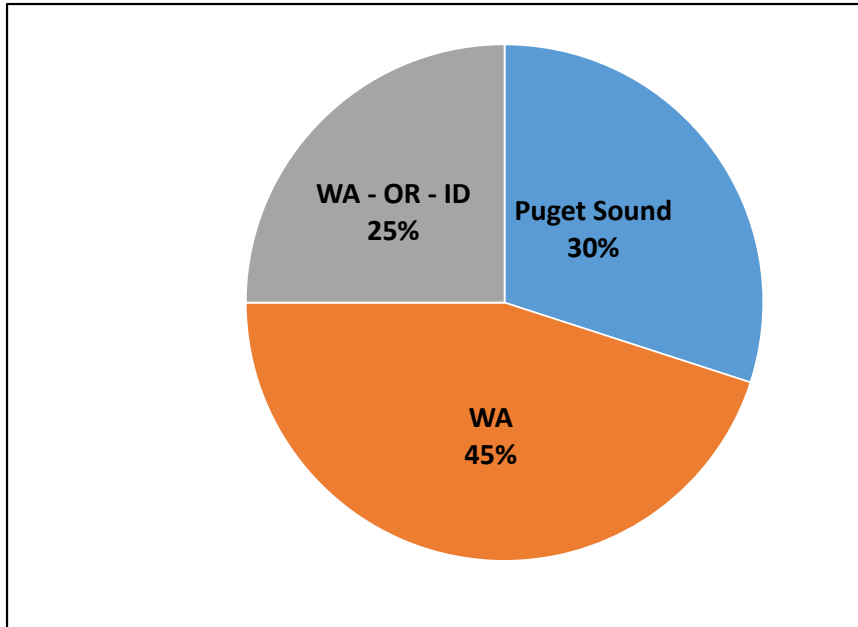


Figure 34 – Portion of locally produced goods purchased

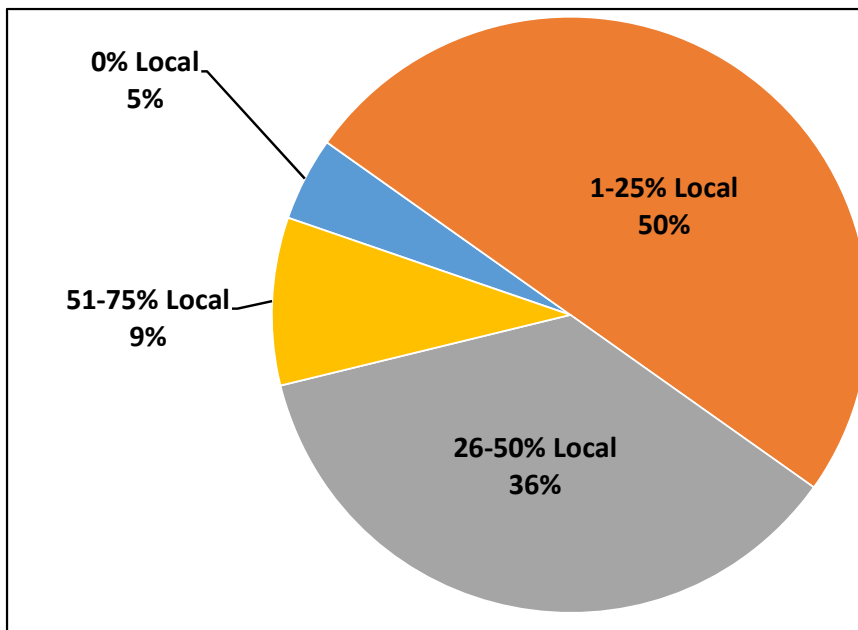
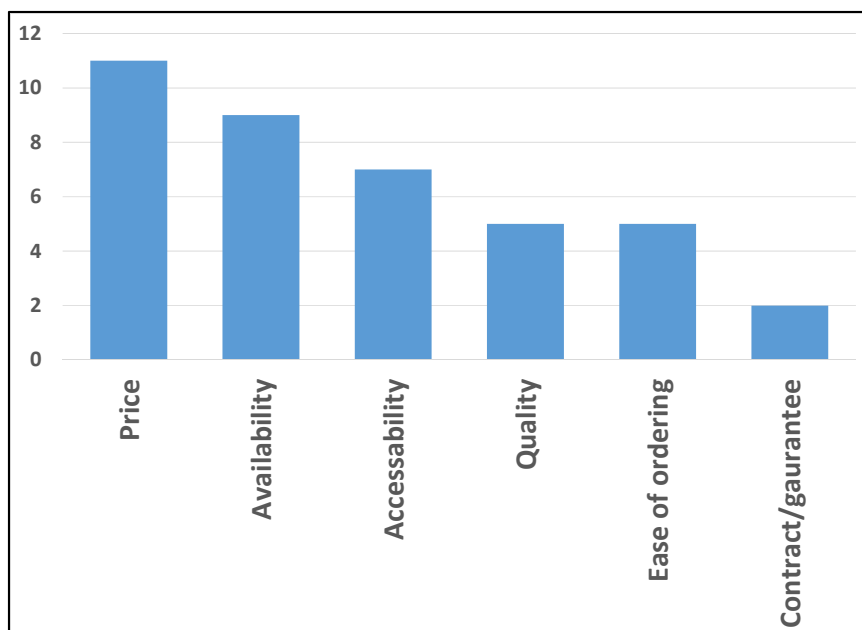


Figure 35 – Requirements for increasing local purchases



When asked what would be their preferred method for placing orders, purchasers did not show a strong preference. “On-line” ordering received the greatest share of “always” responses, while “in person” received the smallest share. Conversely, “in person” received the largest share of “never” responses, and “phone” received the smallest share (figure 36). Aside from those extremes, responses were distributed fairly evenly across all options. When response choices are coded such that “never” is given a value of one, and “always” is given a value of five, “on-line” ordering had a slightly higher average score than “phone” and “in- person,” but the difference between the three methods is not significant (Figure 37 on the following page).

Figure 36 – Preferred methods for ordering

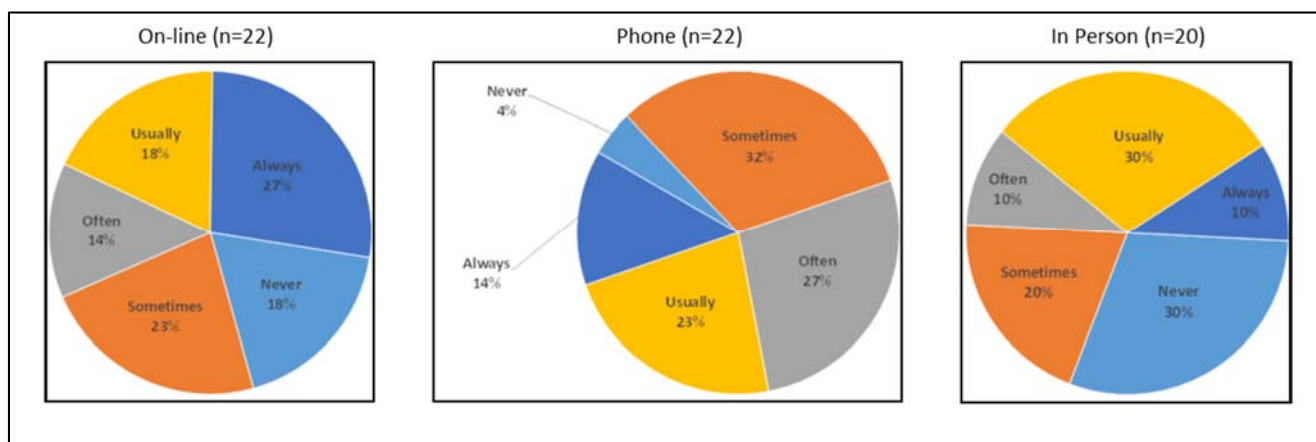
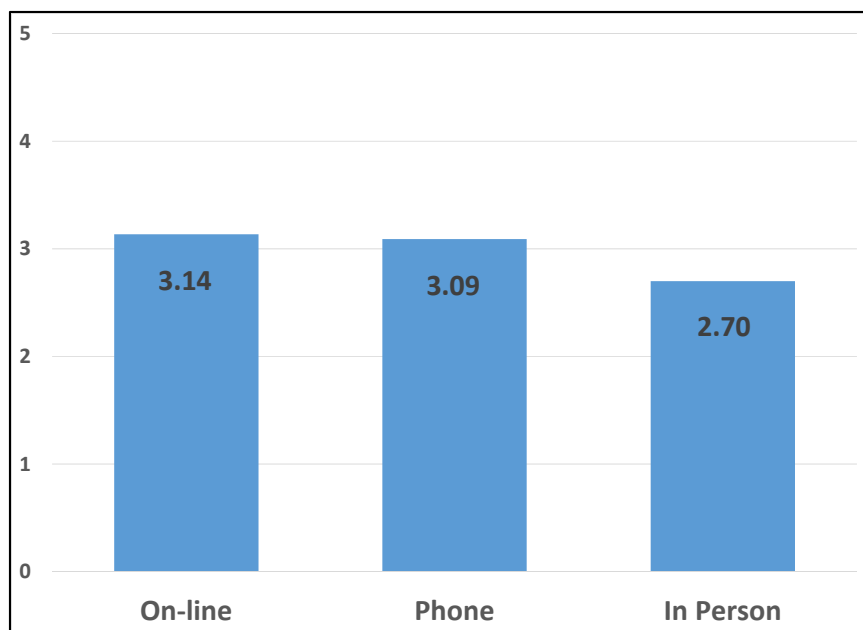


Figure 37 – Average preference for ordering methods



Responses to the question about methods of ordering were re-coded such that “Never” = 1 and “Always” = 5, and average scores for each item were then computed.

While nearly all purchasers take deliveries from food distributors, it is also common for them to receive deliveries aggregated from several farms, to have individual farmers deliver their own product, or for the purchaser to pick up from the producers. The frequency of deliveries varies with size of purchaser and the volume of a particular product purchased, but most take deliveries several times per week, with the larger buyers taking deliveries daily.

About half of the respondents do purchase at least one item directly from producers, ranging from mushrooms and produce to meat and seafood. The relationships underlying those local purchases were generally developed from face-to-face chance meetings, referrals and sometimes a vendor application process with a trial performance period. The greatest barriers to buying from local producers mirrors other responses to questions about purchasing locally-produced goods. A majority of respondents indicated that price and the seasonality of available product were barriers to local purchasing (Figure 38 on the following page). There were also concerns about the range of products available, producers’ ability to meet volume demands, transporting product to where it’s needed and consistent quality. A few also mentioned issues such as needed certifications (e.g., organic or non-GMO), required pre-processing, and USDA documentation.

Following from the identified barriers, respondents offered a few suggestions for way public agencies can make it easier to purchase locally produced goods. The most common theme expressed was the need for a centralized way to find, order, purchase and receive products (Table 17 on the following page).

Figure 38 – Barriers to purchasing local products

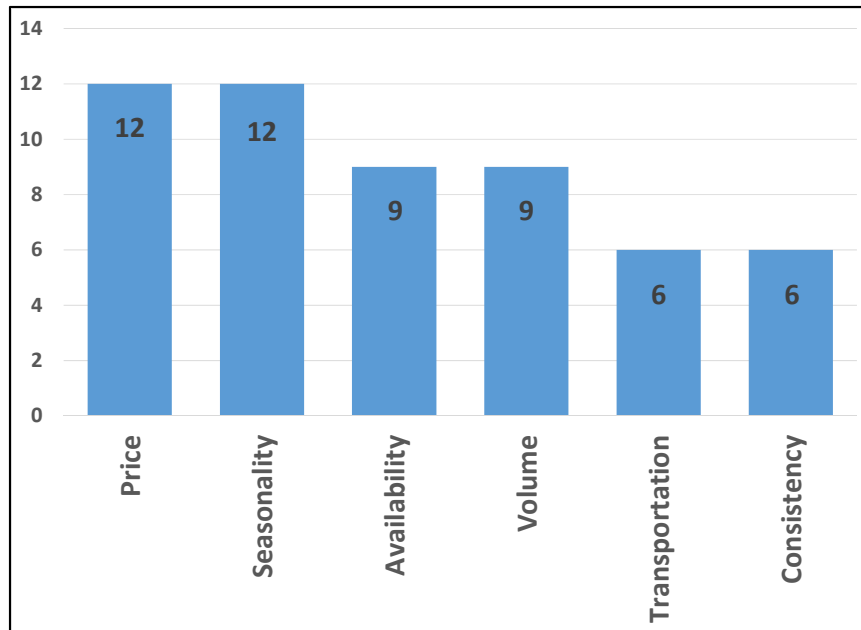


Table 17 – Public agency support for purchase of local products

How could agencies such as WSU Pierce County Extension, Pierce County Agriculture Program and others best support an increased purchase of local agricultural products?
make it easy to buy at a competitive price
teach growers to farm products that are ready for retail. help with post harvest handling
Information about when and where a large local group would be like a farmers market daily somewhere central to my area
Coordinate relationship building and provide a framework for ordering and deliveries.
make them more available, deliver across the bridge
Have a website set up to service a ton of local farms, where we could just log in, order & have delivered. Super convenient and better for the local small farms too since delivery could be combined with other local farmers
Local Distributer
help farmers grow things restaurants will use - get samples to chefs
less restrictions
act as a procurement agency to set up delivery, availability, etc. to make it possible
Regional Co-Op purchasing bids for school districts
work to create coops of farmers who brand and seek distributorship or self distribute (for pork, beef, poultry).
increase demand for local products
institute programs to support and not punish local famers
making products more accessible to city locations (farmers markets are nice but too time consuming for us- parking difficult, crowded, etc).

PART 3 -- FINDINGS

Key Findings

1. Agricultural production is not the primary source of income for most respondents, and the majority are satisfied with the current size of their operation. However, for the one-third of producers that may have an interest in expanding, they see significant obstacles to increasing their production. Because agricultural land is most often purchased outright, high land prices, low land availability and low profit margins combine to make acquiring more land unfeasible. Even if a reasonable cash flow and return on investment can be forecasted for a potential expansion, finding sources of financing is challenging.
2. The current regulatory environment faced by agricultural producers is perceived as daunting. It is viewed as an obstacle to not only expanding, but to operating profitably for any size operation. Producers are faced with multiple layers of regulation from a wide array of agencies at the local, state and federal levels. Regulatory challenges range from learning which regulations apply, the expectations of each regulating agency, an increasing burden of paperwork needed for documenting compliance, the cost of modifications necessary for compliance, and different avenues for appeal and variance associated with each agency. There is also a frustration with limited opportunities to learn about regulatory expectations before punitive actions such as fines are applied.
3. Producer respondents have a vast amount of production experience and many have a desire to share it. They also expressed an interest in sharing marketing strategies, with the caveat that they want to retain control of their own brand identity and product quality.
4. Drainage issues are a problem for a majority of producers, but the cause of those issues vary according to the location and topography of their land. For some, riverine flooding and associated drainage are the problem. For others, ditch maintenance causes problems, and for others seasonal ponding in pastureland is the issue.
5. Many respondents have tried a variety of marketing methods, but most rely on word-of-mouth to build their customer base. Of those who use on-line methods, individual websites are seen as the most effective channel. Buyers indicate they have a preference for online purchasing, which represents a disconnect with the producers.
6. Many respondents indicated that labor issues are a growing concern. They reported having difficulty finding people to do seasonal agricultural work, and had concerns about increasing labor costs.
7. The availability of “infrastructure,” broadly defined, is seen as a limiting factor for operating or expanding agricultural production. The pool of respondents represented a wide array of products and production techniques. Concomitantly, they suggested a wide variety of infrastructure deficiencies in the region, ranging from tractor repair and implements to cold storage to commercial kitchens to slaughter and butchering facilities and services.
8. While taxes were listed as a concern, by far the most common problems expressed by respondents were finances and weather. In conversations with the interviewers regarding weather, it was not discussed as good or bad, just a reality that weather is never perfect and something producers always

have to contend with and take into account. Finances were talked about in terms of income, cash flow and expenses, with many comments that expenses are just too high.

9. Programs and assistance provided through Washington State University Extension and the Pierce Conservation District were seen as generally helpful and many respondents had participated in them.

10. Interview participants who participate in farmers markets were nearly universal in their assessment that there are currently enough, and perhaps too many, markets operating. To make selling at farmers markets profitable for farmers, organizers should concentrate on making existing markets better rather than creating new farmers markets.

11. One of the most common requirements of purchasers is that the food they purchase must be safe. They rely on a number of certifications to assure that safety requirements, as well as other goals, are met. In general though, they are counting on government-mandated licensure, inspection and certification, backed-up with food-seller liability insurance, to assure the safety of the food they purchase.

12. Majority of purchasers require some level of pre-processing, even if it is only washing vegetables to get them ready for kitchen preparation.

13. Purchasers consider a larger geographic area to be “local” than do producers. For example, seventy-five percent of purchasers consider anything produced in Washington, Oregon or Idaho to be “local,” whereas only thirteen percent of producers have the same sense of “local.”

14. Of all the variables when choosing from whom to buy products, purchasers are in general agreement that price is the most important factor.

15. While most purchasers would prefer to buy all of their food products from local sources who use the highest in sustainable, humane and ethical practices, if the food cannot be supplied at a competitive price that allows the purchaser at least a minimum margin of profit, they will of necessity purchase from a lower-cost source.

16. Convenience and accessibility are important for purchasers. Fewer suppliers are preferred to more suppliers; ease of ordering is essential, with on-line options preferred; seasonality is a problem for purchasers that buy food year-around or during the western Washington off season for growing.

Menu of Possible Actions

Based on the key findings presented above, the following is “menu” of actions that could be taken and supported to address producer needs and to make it easier and more convenient for bulk food buyers to purchase locally-produced food.

1. Support programs that increase affordable access to farmlands and expand preservation funding, such as Conservation Futures and Transfer of Development Rights.
2. Find and support opportunities for new farmers to enter into the trade while building experience and equity toward purchase of farmland.
3. Explore pre-processing needs of purchasers and growers in different types of production and look for opportunities to develop and provide the necessary infrastructure.
4. Continue to streamline regulations regarding health, food safety and land use for producers wherever possible. Find opportunities to help producers understand the variety of regulating agencies, the reasons for the various levels of regulation, and to comply with regulations when streamlining is not an option.
5. Assist in support of County or regional branding and marketing opportunities
6. Provide more education opportunities for producers in a variety of formats and on a schedule that fits with on-farm activities.
7. Help producers learn and implement technology solutions to business challenges.
8. Support farmer-buyer networking events, especially before the growing season begins so contracts can be negotiated and specific crops planted.
9. Provide marketing/media support to farmers, such as helping them develop individual marketing plans, honing their branding or improving their social media skills.
10. Explore the feasibility of creating a centralized way for buyers to find, order, purchase and receive locally-produced products. If a feasible approach is found, support its development and operation.

Conclusion

Surveys and interviews with producers and commercial purchasers of agricultural products from Pierce County identified a range of opportunities and challenges facing the local food system. Key findings involve:

1. The ability to expand operations;
2. The regulatory environment;
3. A desire or willingness to share expertise;
4. Drainage issues;
5. A willingness to work together on marketing;
6. Labor issues;
7. Infrastructure is lacking, but needs are widely varied;
8. Weather is always the biggest challenge to production, and;
9. WSU and Conservation District programming is seen as helpful.

Following from those findings, a range of possible program and policy responses include:

1. Support programs that increase affordable access to farmlands and expand preservation funding, such as Conservation Futures and Transfer of Development Rights.
2. Find and support opportunities for new farmers to enter into the trade while building experience and equity toward purchase of farmland.
3. Explore pre-processing needs of purchasers and growers in different types of production and look for opportunities to develop and provide the necessary infrastructure.
4. Continue to streamline regulations regarding health, food safety and land use for producers wherever possible. Find opportunities to help producers understand the variety of regulating agencies, the reasons for the various levels of regulation, and to comply with regulations when streamlining is not an option.
5. Assist in support of County or regional branding and marketing opportunities.
6. Provide more education opportunities for producers in a variety of formats and on a schedule that fits with on-farm activities.

7. Help producers learn and implement technology solutions to business challenges.
8. Support farmer-buyer networking events, especially before the growing season begins so contracts can be negotiated and specific crops planted.
9. Provide marketing/media support to farmers, such as helping them develop individual marketing plans, honing their branding or improving their social media skills.
10. Explore the feasibility of creating a centralized way for buyers to find, order, purchase and receive locally-produced products. If a feasible approach is found, support its development and operation.

Agencies and organizations involved in supporting agricultural production and food systems will take this information under advisement to develop policies, programs and work plans to address issues identified in this study.

Appendix – Verbatim Interview Comments

Subject	Comment
ag COI	I may be more interested in ag COI in the future
Ag in Pierce county	I have been in this for decades and the difference is between night and day. Is it at the point of no return? Other zonings encroaching on ag land, much more road traffic, shrinking support infrastructure.
Ag in Pierce county	if I lease my land because I am retiring I lose the open space tax breaks. The land use is remaining the same but the taxes will double. If I sell my cattle off now I have no income AND the taxes will double so it is a huge financial problem. Yet the land still
Ag in Pierce	county needs to decide if farming is a benefit to the county. If so then county should shoulder some of the costs.
infrastructure	the ag infrastructure in Pierce County is much worse than other WA counties
agritourism	we will move to more u-pick and other agritourism efforts in the future
agritourism	definitely interested in farm tours and farm trails
agritourism	would like to see a farm trail map for different parts of the county
agritourism	could put a PDF farm trail map on the Pierce County website and other websites
agritourism	Agritourism - we want to see it in every way. Social media, etc.
agritourism	I would be interested in a farm trail through Orting
agritourism	I think it would be great to see an agritourism map
agritourism	we would be interested in a local map promoting farm visits
agritourism	I am all for an agritourism map of Pierce County
agritourism	we want to expand our agritourism operations
agritourism	one problem we would have with an agritourism map is that our operations aren't year round. So we wouldn't want people just driving up when we aren't prepared to receive them. The farm guide is better because it can list hours of operation
agritourism	we have had some things happen like the general public going into our buildings or getting up on machinery. We can't have that happen. They think our entire operation is open to the public. We need control over our agritourism efforts
agritourism	if you don't have the right insurance you can lose your business by something going wrong with agritourism
ARL	I want to continue to farm but it is nice to know that if you fall off the tractor and have a catastrophic accident that you can sell the land and survive. The County put this land in ARL in 2001. Now there are so many restrictions that it is much harder to farm.
ARL	If you want to save the farmland through zoning fine but you also need to save the farmer so there is someone to farm the land.
ARL	I do want to see farmland preserved
ARL	ARL is restrictive to farmers but the County can take ARL land and turn it into a drainage project. Aren't we all in ARL together? They can do what they please with the ARL they own but everyone else has to live by restrictions
ARL	we were placed into ARL 2008? And they never compensated us

ARL	I can see how ARL could be so debated. People bought their property without AG in mind and that is not how private property is supposed to work.
ARL	I appreciate the effort to preserve farmland but it is all about money. ARL won't stop a Safeway or other commercial buildings from coming in. The zoning on those individual properties will just be changed from ARL to commercial on a one by one basis.
ARL	we are zoned ARL but I would prefer to be zoned commercial. No question, I do not want to be in ARL
challenges	main challenges with operation: water, population and county gov
cold storage	I would like to see an offsite cold storage/freezer facility. Puyallup would be a good location
commercial	commercial kitchens could be very helpful. I want to make some value added products and access to a commercial kitchen is needed. They are hard to find
conservation	would like to put some of their wooded land into a conservatory
continuing	more local research on pest control needed
continuing	continuing ed is very important. Used to use extension office quite a lot, does online research, PCD. We have good access to information.
continuing education	need more on growing grass (pasture), need more on how to handle livestock, new ranchers will not have the proper equipment to handle livestock properly and they need to learn this. Need to know how to move fences, feed, etc.
continuing education	it is important for farms to have business plans, succession plans, etc. Cultivating Success class and Enterprise for Equity class in Olympia does a good job of helping people with this subject. It is definitely good to have these plans. There could be more classes or training out there for farmers to take advantage of.
continuing	teaching people how to run their farm business is definitely beneficial.
continuing	I think on site education is missing and would be helpful.
continuing	There is a need for education on irrigation. When to irrigate, how, what kind of
continuing	GAP education is needed by many farmers
continuing	I like the idea of one day workshops
continuing	it is very helpful for young people to have a farming education
continuing	any aspect of farming is important to learn about
continuing	I am very interested in continuing ed
continuing	WA Tilth's annual conf is a great resource for continuing ed
continuing	WSU research station has an open day which is good
continuing	helping Pierce Tilth have more steady meeting/get together would be great
continuing	I find information as I need it. I am effective at finding information through the internet, books and talking to people. I am not the classroom type.
continuing	should be real life topics. Learning about two new insect pests that affect me was
continuing	the WSU small farm listserv is good.
continuing	Tilth producers is a great organization to partner with
continuing	we are impressed with how many educational opportunities are out there. WSU farm walks are great. Having a continual farm walk program would be great.
continuing	we do a lot of research online and buy textbooks
continuing	there is a lack of practical knowledge. Knowledge that people that grew up doing it just know.

continuing education	the social aspects are just as important to me as attending a lecture. To have conversations with fellow farmers is very important because we are all dealing with real life problems and we can discuss real life solutions
continuing	what about having a physical library like a book library?
continuing	a curated list of educational YouTube videos based on farming would be nice
continuing	more education is need around irrigation and water conservation
continuing	more information is needed on well testing
continuing	I do some continuing ed courses on the WSU website
continuing	online courses for me are the best for continuing ed
continuing	We do some continuing ed through the Wilber Ellis website
continuing	I have taken courses on bees, pests that are in our area, anything that is up and coming, new procedures, ways to save water, ways to be more efficient
continuing	labor is a huge issue. We need a lot of information on these labor programs and regulations.
continuing	there should definitely be training on the H-2A Program
continuing	There is a lot of information out there on continuing ed and I think we are fine in that regard.
continuing	you never stop learning. Things change all the time.
continuing	extension helps some but they will just read out of the same book I do
continuing	the best education is hands on
continuing	It would be nice to get some more research on the crops we grow here. Example is better varieties of Rhubarb
continuing	if there was enough of a discretionary fund to allow farmers to go to conferences that come up that would be great.
cover crops	we are using cover crops. We want to rotate veggies and cover crops and pasture. We are still working out what the best plan is.
crop insurance	I would be interested in learning more about crop insurance. We have taken a loss on a few crops due to mother nature and it would have been nice to have had them
deer/elk	we have some deer issues and they don't scare off easily
deer/elk	we used to have cows but we got rid of all of them last year. We had to spend too much money on buying forage. The elk herd has grown and they come in and eat all our hay and there is not enough left for the cows.
deer/elk	there are big patches of our field that have been eaten all the way down by the elk.
deer/elk	the elk tear the fences down and now fence repair is an additional expense. (showed a home video of large elk herd damaging fences)
deer/elk	elk fencing is too expensive for the private landowner. That would be the only way to stop the elk.
deer/elk	Elk herd started at 9 now 16. Can also be a problem
development	new housing development filled in wetland and now water backs up onto our property. There was not a permit for the housing development to fill in the wetland. Now trying to formally address the issue legally with County.
development	I used to lease land in Sumner but now it is developed
development	I do not want to sell my development rights. If something happens down the road I don't want my kids to have their hands tied
ditches	ditches are filling up with sediment and need to be cleaned

ditches	languages around maintaining ditches is unclear
ditches	County has not mowed the ditches. Might mow around the ditch but needs to mow the ditch itself.
ditches	8 years ago County placed big bales of straw in ditches. Was supposed to be some sort of filter but it just blocks the ditch from draining.
ditches	the county mows the top of the ditch and the clippings go into the ditch causing the ditch to clog even more!
drainage	Can't do perennials due to too much moisture in winter
drainage	extra drainage comes from upland development
drainage	It would be better for everything if there was better drainage. Get a whole mass of water and then when it eventually drains off it carries off a lot of silt. In the winter time I can't plant cover crops to hold the ground where it needs to be. The cover crop won't survive because the ground is bare and it is just too wet. It would be good for both fish and farms if there was better drainage.
drainage	The ditches in the county must be dug to grade. The ditches don't go anywhere, they don't flow.
drainage	Would love to see the County do more in maintaining the ditches and good drainage.
drainage	would like to see the ditches dug more direct. The County circles them around and they don't drain
drainage	If the ditches were maintained I could put in tile and drain some of the field. Tile wouldn't be necessary in some places if the ditches were just better maintained.
drainage	If the ditches were drained the water table would come down.
drainage	does not get flooding from streams or river
drainage	ditches need to be cleaned and dredged.
drainage	drainage district is becoming defunct. We need commissioners to deal with the ditch problems.
drainage	some issues with drainage but I view it as a problem I deal with as a private landowner. County ditches do not cross my land
drainage	we get a lot of runoff from the hillside. We can't farm the land when it is wet.
drainage	if we could put in more drain tile it would help
drainage	my land drains too fast. I have to irrigate all the time. That is the difference between upland land and the valley. The uplands drain very fast and irrigation is needed to keep certain plants alive.
drainage	we have drain tile. It seems to work.
drainage	there is part of our field we would use if we could get it to drain better
drainage	we have drainage issues but it doesn't really impact our haying operations
drainage	drainage is always an issue for us. Drain tile would help us.
drainage	If there was funding available for drain tile that would be very helpful
drainage	there used to be funding available a long time ago. They were paying 50% for drain tile
drainage	no drainage issues or issues with the land
dredging river	it is a mistake to discontinue sand bar removal program.
dredging river	people talk of maintaining ditches but maintaining the RIVER is not being addressed
dredging river	river has been maintained for 100 years and never a problem with salmon before. Dredging maintains the river. Salmon runs are reduced by blocking the river not dredging it.

EBT	I do not believe that EBT is sustainable and is something we can count on.
employment	currently full time employed off farm
equipment	would prefer to rent mower and baler versus buying
equipment	have used PCD haying equipment but not into shared equipment overall.
equipment	not many sources of small equipment in the PNW
equipment	need a small seed drill that small farmers could use for seeding cover crops. It could be shared because you only need it for one day to plant.
equipment	perform a separate survey for equipment needs for small farmers. What piece of equipment, horse power, size, etc.
equipment	equipment share is tough because everyone takes care of equipment differently. Equipment will break all the time. Then the question is who fixes it and who pays for the fix.
equipment	For equipment share a separate entity should be involved that owns and houses the equipment.
equipment	I can find equipment easy enough. I have a truck and trailer and can go get what I
equipment	renting equipment would be something I am interested in
equipment	We want to expand with tractors, row crop tractors, we work in narrow spaces.
equipment	if I was short on a tractor and there was one available that would be very helpful to
equipment	we would be very interested in equipment leasing programs
equipment	there is no competition in Pierce County for tractor repairs. It is much more expensive here than in Counties farther north
equipment	I shop online a lot. I use Craig's list and a lot of it comes from back East so you have to make arrangement for shipping
equipment	Kubota in Puyallup is good for tractors but not a lot of other implements
equipment	It would be lovely to have a shared equipment system because so many of the things we need we only need for a couple of weeks
equipment	the problem is who is going to maintain shared equipment
equipment	I don't loan my equipment out because I can't afford to have it damaged
equipment	the east coast has some interesting things going on with equipment share (Mother Earth?). There is good information out there that can be gleaned
equipment	Having a mobile chicken processing unit might be helpful. Different from the PCD mobile meat processing unit.
equipment	we could use a no-till drill for pastures in Pierce County. It could be a share program
equipment	we share equipment with the community.
equipment	we get most of our equipment from Craig's list
equipment	there does not seem to be good infrastructure for finding people to fix equipment at an affordable price. That is a challenge.
equipment	starting farming can be really capital intensive with purchasing equipment. We have gone the used equipment route but that has its own problems with repair, etc.
equipment	we share a tractor with our neighbor and it works well because we don't use the tractor much
equipment	we would love to have a feeder for the hogs.
equipment	we would like to have an automatic watering system
equipment	we get most of the things we need by shopping online
equipment	we need an old fashioned meat locker or freezer storage

equipment	my equipment is pretty simple and I service it all myself
equipment	we need new equipment but can't afford a new \$200,000 tractor.
equipment	can find what I need either locally or in Oregon
expand	wants to expand operation in future but is not ready yet
farm agent	Ag agent was very helpful. It would be good to have that back.
farm agent	Ag agent was good at keeping me up to date on things I don't have time to research.
farm agent	There was positive momentum when the Ag agent was in Pierce County. That was all lost when they gutted the program.
farm agent	WSU used to be good but I don't go to them anymore for information. I have to find it from other sources.
farm agent	When Chris Benedict was here it was great. That is missing now and it would be helpful to have someone performing that role again
farm agent	It would be good to have an ombudsman again
farm agent	Really liked the farm agent and thought it would be a position that benefits everyone but they pulled the funding and lost the position.
farm business	I view farming as a business and that all the difficulties farmers have is just part of the business. Any business has to deal with infrastructure issues, permitting issues, etc. So I don't buy into complaining about how hard it is to do things when you are a farmer. I am a farmer and I accept it as just part of business reality
farm business	I dislike that farmers are viewed as disadvantaged. I definitely don't want new farmers to think that. More positive messages around being a farmer. YES WE CAN!
farm incubators	it would be neat to see a farm incubator in Pierce County but there would need to be a dedicated non-profit that runs it.
farm incubators	my experience with a few different incubators is that at the end of 1-2 years people should be ready but they don't feel like they are ready to lease land or do not have the financing to do so and in fact people are staying 3-5 years and that is not the intent of the incubator.
farm incubators	The ag business park sounds like a great middle ground to me.
farm incubators	the biggest obstacle people seem to feel is the access to affordable land. Other limiting factors are access to land near people they know and access to land in a similar climate to where the incubator is.
farm incubators	Some incubators are very different than others. I don't see them as being very sustainable. It is good for people to get a taste of what farming is like. I'm not sure it is creating a lot of new farmers.
farm sales bus	a bus will take people around to different farms so they can shop.
farm to school	farm to school or business only works well for greens, maybe a few other veggies or fruits. Meat and eggs will not work because they are too expensive and schools won't pay that price when they can get it much cheaper
farmers	too many farmers markets can dilute sales at existing markets. Small farmer don't have the staff time to attend especially if sales are diluted.
farmers	I would rather see efforts put into more promotion of existing farmer's markets than into starting new markets
farmers	there will need to be more new farmers to support more new farmers markets
farmers	farmers markets are hardly worth it for many farmers. Stand around all day and hard to make your money back while losing a whole day at the market.

farmers	too many markets. Thins out the business from market to market. Makes it less worthwhile to staff a market that might have low sales.
farmers	can the farmers markets set up a deal with farmers to buy several CSA's?
farmers markets	we definitely want to support farmers markets but they are not a big income for us. We can actually lose money at a farmer's market by the time you add in all the expenses compared to sales.
farmers markets	new farmers markets can potentially reduce sales at another market. It makes no sense for a farmer to try and be at every market. You have to hire someone to staff the market and you probably won't get that back in sales.
farmers	I don't believe the solution is more farmers markets because that just spreads everything thinner.
farmland	There is enough farmland available and enough farmers but the economics of buying the land is an impediment
farmland	I think there will be a flood of farmers wanting to come here
farmland	we are always trying to find more land. It is very difficult to find land now. Land availably is a problem now
farmland	we were looking at land near South Prairie but the County bought it up. I think it was a farmland trust thing but they never leased it back out to farming.
farmland	we were looking at land that is more upland. Sometimes if you get higher ground mixed with low ground you can extend the berry crop to earlier or later in the season.
financing	good government programs out there. Beginning farmer rancher loans, etc.
financing	the last piece of land we bought was a long processes to get financing. If there was an easier way to find financing it would be helpful. What programs are out there to help with farmers getting financing?
Fish and	I have struggled with Fish and Wildlife. Very difficult to get a response when dealing with them on elk issues.
food hubs	might be good for surpluses of things. It is like a wholesaler for small growers. I am optimistic about the potential of a food hub but I have heard negative things from other farmers.
food hubs	We have some excess and if we could sell through a food hub that might help
food hubs	I would love to see a food hub come together. I think it would be very promising. I produce a lot of things and I don't always see the market for it when it is ready.
food hubs	we would use a food aggregation service if it made sense. I not sure if it would work well for meat
food hubs	our production supply isn't consistent so a food hub might help
food hubs	you have be careful about how a food hub would work with tracing which producer brought in which produce. You don't want your reputation hurt because of someone else's bad product.
food hubs	I have not participated in Food hubs and might not have a use for it.
food hubs	I would not want to market with someone I don't know. I would not want our reputation connected to someone who might not follow all the food safety
food hubs	food hubs work well with fruit and veggies. There are still some problem with meats
FSMA	advocacy and resource sharing is needed with the small to medium farmer to be able to navigate FSMA and GAP. We will need a lot of help dealing with implementing this. We would need someone from the state to come and do a trial/mock audit

FSMA	adds a whole new layer for us. We would have to buy new equipment and pay for a lot of testing
GAP	advocacy and resource sharing is needed with the small to medium farmer to be able to navigate FSMA and GAP
government	Government moves very slowly and to see anything actually happen is a miracle. In reference to serving on gov farming committees
grants	the dept. of ecology is looking at a drought relief program. We would be interested in that. Our hay crop was bad this year due to the drought
grants	I would like to see financial incentives or grants for livestock cross fencing and pasture watering systems
harvest fest	I would be interested in seeing two events a year. Not just the one harvest fest.
infrastructure	infrastructure is shrinking. I used to have 4 sources for bulls now there is only one.
infrastructure	several auction houses have gone out of business for cattle sales
infrastructure	used to cut and rake own hay. Then moved to having someone come in and do it all. Now it is really hard to find someone to do it and everyone needs their hay done at the same time.
infrastructure	the support system for feed and other farm stuff we need is lacking completely.
infrastructure	I get one thing from Dell's but otherwise the Ag infrastructure in Pierce County is gone
infrastructure	There is nothing we can really do about ag infrastructure other than just watch it
infrastructure	a local hatchery for chickens would be difficult. It is a specialized business where economy of scale matters. I don't know how a new local hatchery could compete with established companies on price.
infrastructure	we need a better pinning system
infrastructure	we would like to pour a slab for the hogs
labor	used to hire seasonal labor but rethought it. Would hire labor and train but then would not get the same labor back again next year. To constantly train is expensive. Now just has year round labor.
labor	would be nice if I could grow crops during winter time to give the full time labor more work.
labor	labor is one of the biggest issues and will become very big in the future.
labor	the government will definitely need to help with labor issues down the road. So the farmer will not get penalized because the labor program is already approved.
labor	labor is a huge issue. The issue left unaddressed may drive some farmers out of
labor	feds need to update guest worker program
labor	state needs to address temp farm worker housing
labor	we believe in paying workers a good living wage because they are really important to us. Yet if the working wage goes up we don't know what that would do to us
labor	internship program. Because of our net income level we would have to develop our own accredited internship program.
labor	another helpful thing would be how to navigate the affordable care act for ourselves and employees.
labor	a one pager might be helpful on farm insurance options
labor	labor is are number one concern by far
land	Pierce County's effort to save farmland is a little late

land trusts	There are some interesting land trusts on the East Coast that are coming up with some interesting systems to help farmers.
loans	a micro loan program would be great for small farmers. Loans under \$5,000.
local food	how do you make local food available to all people and not just people that shop at Proctor's farmers market
local food	we need more people to buy local food in order to sell more of our product
local food	I want to sell my produce to local people and not have to drive to Seattle
local food	local corner stores have to want to carry local foods and then Pierce County Heath can arrange to use federal monies to implement. This has happened in 5 cities around the
local food	we think it is very import for there to be support for local farmers and local foods
market	customers would come from Craig's list
market	selling mainly through farm stand and Farmers markets. Will start U-Pick in a few years
market	we do a little wholesale. We need to find more people to wholesale to.
market	I sell to Proctor Farmers market, CSA, direct sale to restaurants, and a little bit of whole sale
market	we sells eggs to PCC in Seattle, Tacoma Boys and Marlene's, one farmers market and U-
market	We do CSA, on farm sales, we are not at farmers markets now but will look to go back to the Proctor market at some point.
market	we sell meat mostly to Seattle. We sell direct to consumer and are building that up in Pierce County
market	we do not go to farmers markets. I think it would take me a whole week to recover from that
market	one to one relationships are very important to us. We do monthly drops to customers
market	we would like to get more local customers. We have considered price differentials for the less wealthy but have not implemented that.
market	we have concerns about targeting an elite audience. We want everyone to have good meat. We haven't figured out how to do it yet
market	we do u-pick and a farm stand with value added products. We also do the Orting farmers market
market	we sell into retail and wholesale markets. We used to do U-pick but not right now. We might get back into U-pick
market	CSA is a good route for us.
market	CSA's are better for us than farmer's markets. Farmer's markets are a risk because you spend the time and effort going to market and then have much of your perishable product unsold. Where with CSA's you know exactly how much you will sell.
market	wants to go to direct sales in the future
market	farm to table would be good but it needs to expand significantly in Tacoma to be something that works. There needs to be more restaurants that look to local foods.
marketing	this is the first year we are in the Farm Guide. It has been very helpful
marketing	more marketing would not hurt anything.
marketing	I would like more customers
marketing	not interested in marketing the business
marketing	if you sell only to big chains and you lose an account you lost a massive percentage of your revenue. Expanding onsite retail business is a way to help offset those big hits

marketing	I try and focus on marketing just as much as growing or else my business may not
marketing	we use word of mouth through social media. Get on people's blogs and listservs
marketing	Ag COI should work on supporting a big buy local food campaign. Make it cool to buy local food. Target people that are not going to farmers markets. Many other people may be interested in buying local foods. Market to these other people and make buying local food "normal"
marketing	We market through the Farmers Market (word of mouth), Facebook, website
marketing	I use my website and it gets a lot of attention
marketing	helping farms get better websites would be a great help to many farmers
marketing	have 6-10 templates for webpages that a web designer could set up for farms. Have a package deal that for a few hundred dollars farmers could get themselves set up with a website with minimal effort on their part
marketing	for websites I looked at WIX and WordPress but I didn't want to get locked into a monthly fee
marketing	I have a sign-up sheet at farmers markets. I develop my own email list from this. Then I send out weekly reminders to my list of what I have available this week. I say what is new and exciting this week.
marketing	I use "icontact" for marketing (constant contact is another one I think). It has an annual charge \$120 a year. I get customers at the market because of it. It is a good price for \$10 a month
marketing	people need to be set up to take credit cards. Square or Intuit's version of Square are a few examples. When I was able to take credit cards at the farmers market sales increased dramatically
marketing	I rely quite a bit on word of mouth for customer growth
marketing	we use the Farm Guide and it is money well spent
marketing	we don't use it now but we are interested in YouTube and Facebook and online news letters
marketing	We have used the Farm Guide. I think it is neat and a good resource but I don't think we get much business from it for some reason.
marketing	We use the Eat Wild website and much of our business comes from people using Eat
marketing	we do Facebook, our website and the Farm guide for marketing our farm
marketing	I was interviewed by Pierce County gov and the video was aired on PCTV. There should be more of that. Educating the public on the farmers and farms in Pierce County. There were a few people that came to the farm and said it was because of that TV interview
marketing	There should be a series of interviews with farmers on the gov channel or YouTube. This would help inform the public and drive business to the farms
marketing	we hand out many Farm Guides and think they are great
marketing	we have a website and use Facebook. We need to do a better job updating these
meat processing	We use heritage in Rochester for butchering. For whole/half hogs we started using Olsen's in Enumclaw. They slaughter on farm and then take it back and process. It seems to be working well so far.

meat processing	It can be a little scary to trust someone small to process your meat. There is fear that you are not getting all of your meat back. There also might be some sanitary concerns. Someone smoking or dropping a cut of meat. I trust the people who we use but other people have told me stories
mobile	We looked at the mobile processing unit but it made more sense for us to use Kapowsin, Rochester and Enumclaw. We could look at it again.
mobile	it is unfortunate that the mobile meat unit failed to meet expectations that it would provide on farm USDA services. It just became logistically complicated
mobile slaughter unit	why is this mobile meat unit so logistically complicated when Island Ground is so successful? A key difference is that Island Ground owns their own cut and wrap facility and that is where they make a lot of their money
mobile	not helpful to many producers because many sites don't have the infrastructure to handle the mobile unit.
mobile	many more constraints on the unit then people really new at the beginning. Less mobile, sites must be USDA approved, kill boxes, waste removal, expensive to move.
mobile	much discussion on the MSU not relevant to the needs assessment
mobile	a need is for more people to understand how the MSU works and how to use it because there are some misunderstandings around how it works and how to use it.
needs	horticulture advice, diseases
needs	might need business planning
needs	equipment at some point
needs	the two big gaps for us are funding and knowledge
neighbor	we have had a lot of complaints about our operations from neighbors who do not farm. Mainly noise complaints
NRCS	hoop house program is great. I got \$6,000 from NRCS and that was excellent
NRCS	NRCS money for cover crop seed is incredibly small. I got \$80 for cover crop seed. That does not even cover the cost to deal with all the NRCS paperwork.
NRCS	many of the NRCS programs offer very limited amount of funding. Not enough to make an impact
NRCS	does not participate in NRCS programs
NRCS	We participate in some NRCS programs and staff is good to work with
NRCS	the contracts are a little laborious to fill out but the programs are good
NRCS	I have participated in several grants from NRCS and it has been lovely.
NRCS	I had an EQIP contract with NRCS. Long drawn out contract process and tedious to go through.
NRCS	I have participated in several NRCS programs and I think they are great
NRCS	we looked at NRCS funding for tiling. It think it is restrictive. The money is for renovating existing tile not for installing new tile.
NRCS	We participated in the EQIP high tunnel program. We also had NRCS money for cover crops and pollinator programs.
NRCS	We received NRCS funding for getting water to our hogs.
NRCS	Our fence was built by NRCS money
NRCS	NRCS help purchase the developmental rights on our property
NRCS	NRCS will also have to approve our building plan because they have some ownership of the conservation easement

NRCS	we were working with NRCS but we wouldn't do it again. The paperwork was so tedious and so many hoops to jump through. The money we spent on our own time and energy was not a good payback for us.
PCC Farmland	We have an excellent informal relationship with PCC. They are great. I don't know where they get this endless supply of competent fresh faced staff
PCC Farmland	The amount of time I spend on PCCFT paperwork and inspections is cumbersome.
PCD	I think Snohomish CD pays for cover cropping but PCD doesn't fund things other counties do.
PCD	uses PCD resources for certain things
PCD	we are very pleased with our relationship with PCD
PCD	PCD helped us get funding for planting native plants
PCD	I think PCD is great for pasture program. I would like to see PCD do more with crop farming.
PCD	PCD workshops aren't really very ag focused. More for homes with a few chickens or people with a few horses. Most of the information is very basic and a level below anyone with farming experience.
permitting	needs a bigger cooler but it was easier to buy two reefer trailers than deal with the County to build a bigger cooler. Would need permits to bring in electrical lines, etc. Reefer trailers were not the ideal solution but easier to accomplish.
permitting	very slow permitting in Pierce County. County staff does not move permitting along
permitting	wanted to clean out stream reach that was choked with Canary grass, applied for a permit with County and County gave it to the State, law said the State was to give an answer within 45 days, at the end of 45 days State said they needed two more documents which they could have asked for at the beginning. Because of this there is a 45 day extension. Meanwhile the pasture was degrading due to the stream reach not being cleaned out. We had to go ahead without the permit before too much of the land was being destroyed. Now we are finishing with the permitting process.
permitting	interested in bringing back farm stand but permitting has too many restrictions and takes too long
pests	big problem with Canada geese. Graze pasture down to the point of damaging the grass roots.
Pierce County	had a good experience working with Pierce County when first setting up the property
Pierce County	The County is far too complex and confusing to get anything done
Pierce County	have many difficulties with Pierce County gov
Pierce County	Pierce County says they want to help the farmers and preserve the land but they are extremely difficult to work with when it comes to permitting.
Pierce County	if you want to build a structure you then also have to deal with storm water and a fire hydrant. One project leads to many different permits and many different costs.
Pierce County	They want to preserve farms but then make farming an exercise in permitting and fees. There is no time or money left for farming.
Pierce County	doing things without a permit is something you almost have no choice but to do. You can't continue on with your operations while waiting 3 years for a permit
Pierce County	the pro farming message from the County is just show.

Pierce County	the County has the staff to go around and write permit violations but not to clean the ditches. Direct example of County putting effort into penalizing farmers while also not doing anything to help them with a critical issue
Pierce County	Dealing with WSDA and dealing with Pierce County is like night and day. WSDA is really easy and nice to work with.
Pierce Tilth	Pierce Tilth used to meet more regularly as information sharing group. Then it kind of morphed into a more social thing and is slowly meeting less and less. Would be good to get it going again.
Pierce tilth	it would be good to keep a Pierce Tilth google group or website going and keep
Pierce Tilth	It would be nice to have more activity with Pierce Tilth. If someone was being a coordinator of the group it might be helpful
planting	start to plant rhubarb in march, summer crops in early April. Plant every weak until first of September. Plants harvested in 30-50 days depending on time of year. Can't do perennials due to too much moisture in winter.
processing	when we lost our processor, Valley Pack, it was huge. It would be wonderful to have a processor back in this area
public transportation	public transportation is important to us. One of us works full time on the farm and the other commutes to a day job. If we didn't have access to the Sounder transit we wouldn't farm here. It was a big deciding factor in buying a farm in this location
purchasing	there seems to be plenty of seed/feed suppliers. We don't have any problem with that.
regulations	There are a million regulations. Go try and build a building...as a farmer it is very difficult to build what you need. The amount of regulations are nuts. If you needed a cooler today it would actually take you over a year to get it built.
regulations	If you need something you could just start building it but then you would get yourself in trouble.
regulations	It is a very difficult path to go down with the County and all the permitting. It doesn't match on ground realities
regulations	It takes a lot of money, permitting fees.
regulations	as a new landowner I have no idea about permits and regulations. It is very challenging to go to the County website and read archaic code language and figure out what I am allowed to do and not allowed to do on my farm. It is very challenging as a lay person. If there was any way for the County to come out here and walk around with me and tell me what I can and cannot do it would be very helpful.
regulations	I have been told by other people to just do what you need to do and plead ignorance. Do what you need to do to run your farm and don't tell anybody. For me it is legitimate. I legitimately do not know what I need to do as far as permitting.
regulations	I am afraid to ask the question to government. I want to know what I can and can't do. I don't want to be quizzed on where my property is and now be targeted for permit or regulation violations for just simply trying to ask a question.
regulations	organic certification works well for me and I find it quite easy. There might be a general idea out there that it is difficult or prohibitive but I don't see that as the case

regulations	we need more support from the County. Someone offsite from us did something unpermitted on their property which caused the stream to back up and flood our pasture. Our livestock were in danger and we needed to dig the stream out right away and drain the flooded pasture. The County said no you have to wait for a permit. What a disaster. The County's response was shocking.
regulations	I don't have issues with county regulations. My issues are with County taxes
regulations	we are much more like Clark County than Skagit. Pierce County should not try and be like Skagit we should be more like Clark when it comes to codes and regulations
regulations	there is a disconnect between commercial building codes and agriculture needs. Yakima and Clark counties are better at having ag codes that make sense. It makes no sense for someone to have to build an ag structure to meet commercial building codes that will never actually apply to how the ag structure is being used
regulations	have a simplified ag code that allows for streamline building permits
regulations	there is a big difference between King and Pierce County regulations around farmers markets. Make it just like King County. They have easier and better regulations around farmers markets. Synchronize regulations between the counties
regulations	we haven't been affected by regulations in a way that has caused us any problems
regulations	The Health department is all about protocol. Many of the things you need to do to pass an inspection actually have nothing to do with your operation
regulations	I have had several experiences with the County where everyone you deal with has a different answer than the last person you talked with.
regulations	regulations impact everything we do. I mean everything. We used to just grow and pick it. We just went through a food safety audit that was a huge amount of work and a huge amount of paperwork. Would I like to see it be less? Yes.
regulations	There is a regulation for everything. It is just how it is now
regulations	Pierce County is much more helpful now than how they used to be.
SARE	I participate in a SARE grant
succession	I need a plan to exit farming. I don't want to now but I need a plan because I don't think I can sustain my farm business in the Puyallup valley flood plain.
succession	My kids aren't going to want to farm so I need to plan how to exit farming over the long term.
supply	when you sell to chain stores you need consistent supply. The only way you can do that is to have a larger land base.
Tacoma Food	Tacoma Food Co-op had issues with presenting the produce very poorly. Also buys produce very cheaply from farmers.
taxes	it would be nice if being in ARL was compensated by reduced taxes
taxes	vicious cycle...taxes keep going up, I need to produce more cows to cover the taxes, elk are eating all the pasture and I can't support cows.
taxes	taxes are high. Can I make enough money on my land to offset the taxes? It is an impediment to sustaining the business.
taxes	we have one piece of land that has very high taxes due to it being in a "drainage basin". It is farming use just like our other couple of fields but the taxes are so much higher. It is frustrating

taxes	Pierce County has a personal property tax for businesses. I already paid taxes on my equipment when I bought now I have to pay more taxes on owning it? It is an odious tax at best. Grossly unfair and not applied evenly across the board. An appalling tax to tax someone for owning something. It is just Pierce County and it is incredibly business unfriendly
taxes	the taxes associated with succession planning is very complicated and expensive. It would be nice if there was an attorney on retainer at the County to help people transition to the next generation without making all these mistakes with taxes and how it impacts the business in a negative way.
taxes	we found out there was an exemption on sales tax if you bought replacement parts
TDR	King County TDR program is for real. Pierce County is 25 years too late.
TDR	If the goal is to protect farmland than TDR is the way to go. Not zoning.
USDA	I am interested in using USDA grant for value added products. Maybe the Ag COI could be an incubator for helping people develop their own value added products
USDA/NRCS	I have not participated in any USDA or NRCS programs
USDA/NRCS	does not know about these programs but would be interested to learn more.
USDA/NRCS	did look at a program to use irrigation but it didn't go through with it.
utilities	we have big energy bills. I don't know about the energy efficiency programs
utilities	I really need help getting my power bill down
value added	We would like to see incentives or grant money to pursue making value added products with our produce
water	my main issue is with water supply
water	we use drip irrigation and try to be efficient as possible because I do not want to stress the well.
water rights	land is limited for crops that require water. Without access to water the land is limited on what kind of Ag can be implemented on the land
water rights	I am currently looking for land but I am not interested in land that doesn't have access to water rights.
water rights	It was important for us to get our water rights settled. It was difficult. First we had to "open up the Title" in order to look way back in time. The water right was buried in the title.
water rights	We went through the County to examine our water rights. It was a little tricky. They didn't seem to have that information at their fingertips but eventually they had it on